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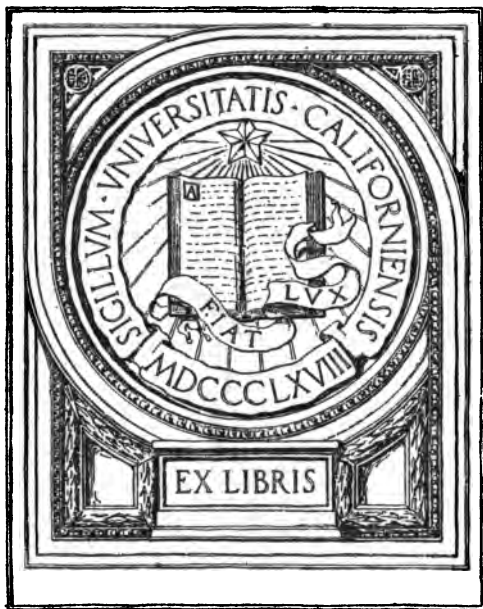
THE DILEMMA
OF THE
MODERN CHRISTIAN

EDWARD H. LEPPENS

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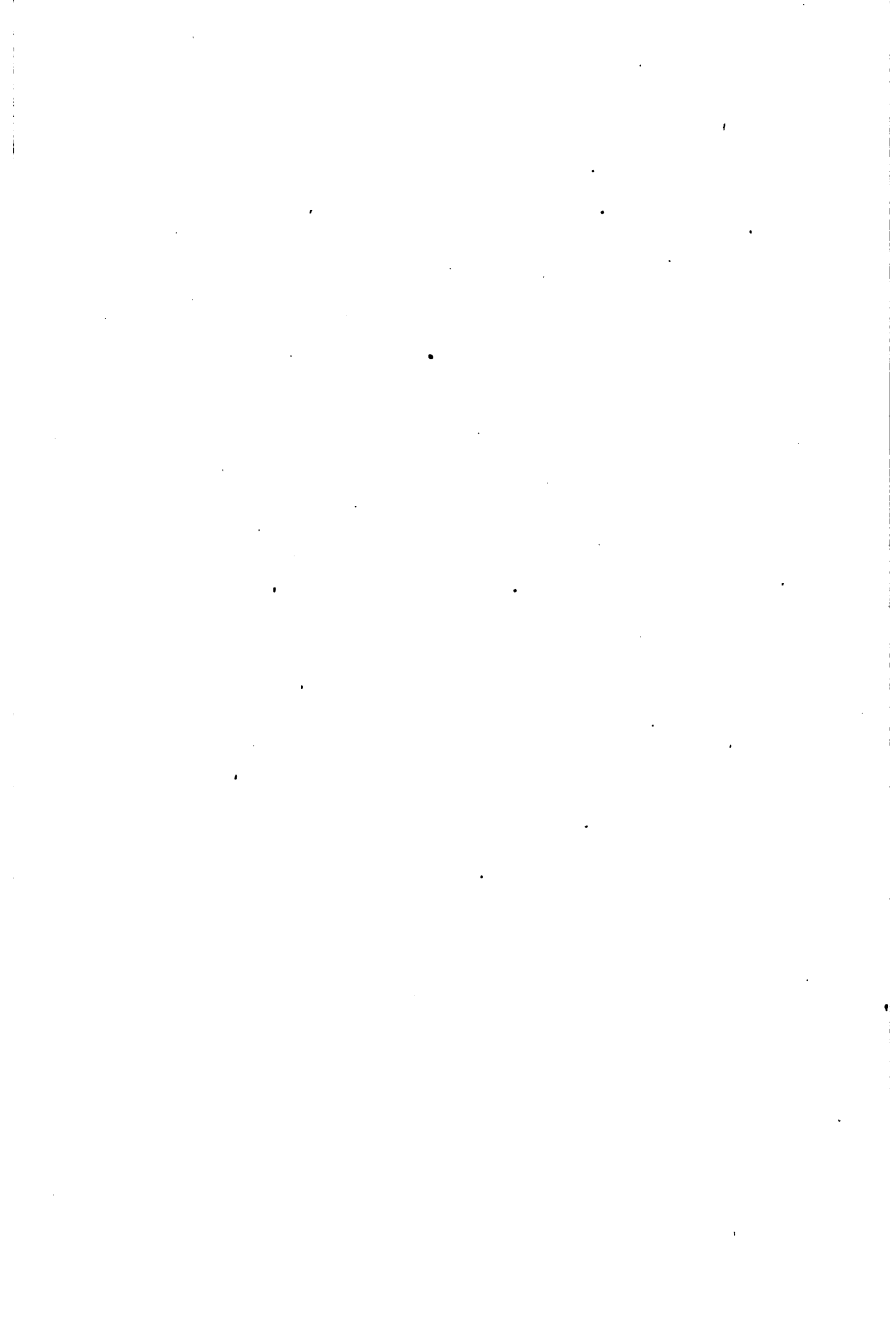
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THE DILEMMA OF THE MODERN CHRISTIAN

HOW MUCH CAN HE ACCEPT OF
TRADITIONAL CHRISTIANITY?

BY
EDWARD H. EPPENS

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FOREWORD

The following pages contain no attempt to solve the insoluble questions of modern thought. What has been aimed at is simply a statement concerning the central facts of Christian faith and worship. There are many people to whom the penumbra of faith is too congenial to allow them to feel at ease in the bright light of the central sun. Some of these may appreciate an honest expression concerning the difficulties of their position. Those whose faith has suffered total eclipse—if there be any such—will not be influenced by another person's assurance that the sun still shines unto the coming of the perfect day. With those who have reached finality about the momentous questions of Christian prayer, the writer seeks no quarrel. He is aware that he has nothing to offer them.

But perhaps it may not be out of place to assert that the purpose of these pages is not to unsettle cherished convictions. The writer's own faith in God and God's message to man would make such a negative proceeding impossible. The modern man is asking questions. He wants to know. If he remains humbly conscious of his limitations and is willing to try out, patiently, whatever the progress of human thought presents, he shall have nothing to fear

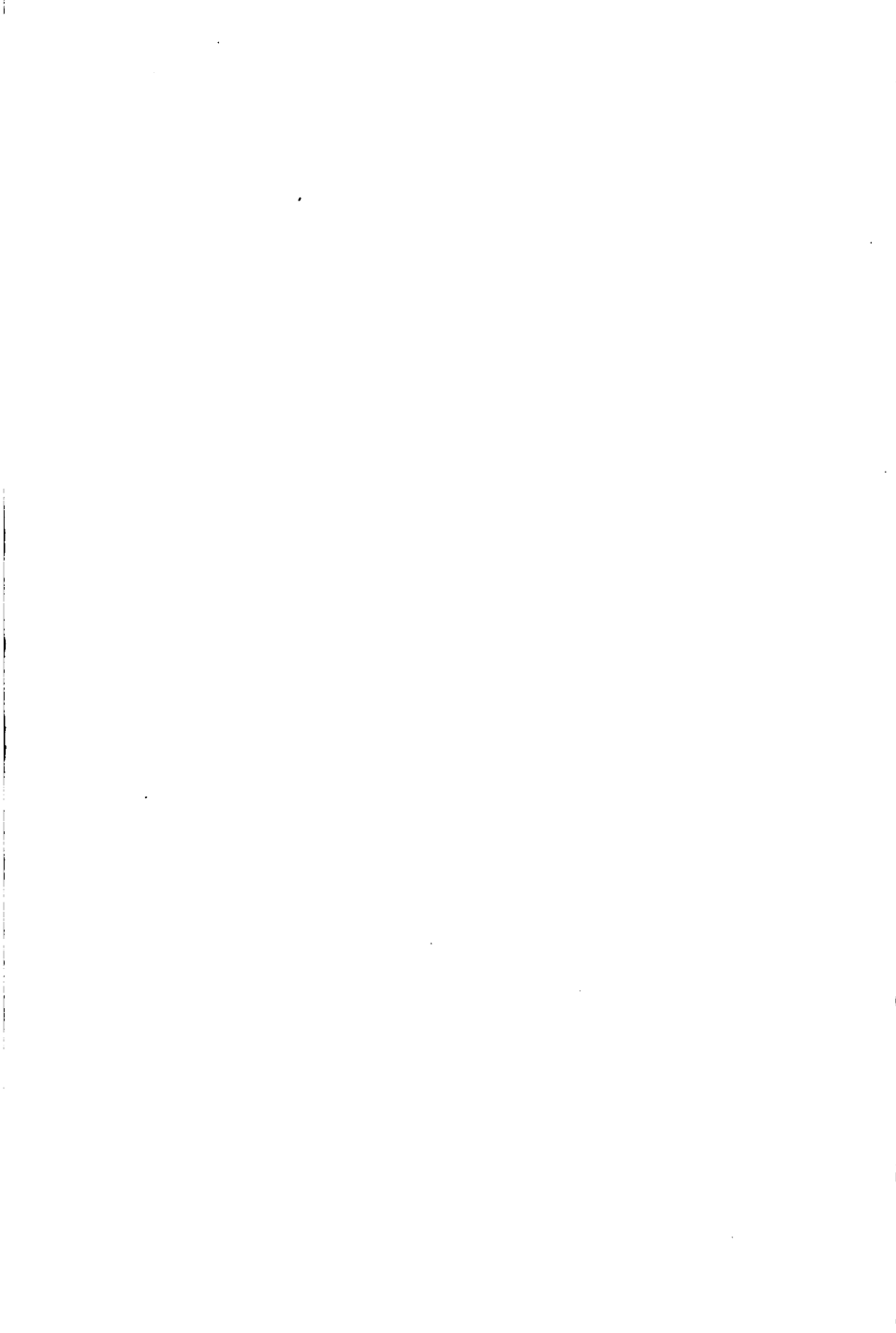
FOREWORD

**of the war of words over debatable subjects.
What is not true will fall of its own weight;
what is true and of God will stand forever.**

E. H. E.

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THE DILEMMA OF THE MODERN CHRISTIAN

THE CENTER OF THEOLOGY

Thoughts, like heavenly bodies, move in cycles. Periods of obscurity are followed by periods of intense illumination. For long seasons an important truth may entirely be cut off from view by a relatively small but more immediately important body of ideas, only to burst upon our astonished gaze with the suddenness of a new discovery. And the chances are that in a very short time some "discoverer" will present himself with the triumphant announcement that he has had a vision of a new world, and the public, always anxious to see something new, will stare and marvel at the wonderful progress of truth. It is at this point that the student of the past usually intrudes to put the discovery into the right light and to show that it is, most probably, but the emergence of some old, neglected, or forgotten fact.

In theology one of these many binary systems of thought is represented by the terms Jesus and God. The two extremes express themselves in the opposite statements that theology is the science of God, and that our theology must be christo-centric. That Christ occupies or

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ought to occupy the commanding position in the theological world has been hailed again and again as the grand discovery of modern times. This is true not only of the so-called devotional literature of today, but it applies to serious and ponderous productions, and the pulpits, from the metropolis to the logging camp, repeat the news.

In view of the urgency with which this view is presented it becomes absolutely imperative to examine afresh the basis of so far-reaching a claim and to see, if possible, in how far the authentic facts of history fit themselves into the theory.

That the place of Christ is at the very center of our religious life and thought is anything but a new claim; the whole cultus of the church gives a practical demonstration of its antiquity. It will be our business in the following pages to authenticate, approximately, how far this tendency is associated with the life of Christianity and how far it is justified by the practices of its founders and its inspirer, and by the inferences which the modern man is bound to make from the modern conception of God and His universe.

There have never been voices wanting, to tell us that the demand that our theology be christo-centric grows out of a confusion of terms. And yet the demand was a most natural

one in the circumstances. Was not theology largely responsible for that mountain of rubbish that had been piled up between God and the soul, cutting off all means of communication with the other world? The term rubbish is used advisedly, as indicating what is, in the business of religion, relatively worthless, though we are conscious that we shall never be able to repay the debt we owe to past generations of sturdy thinkers and path-finders who tried to make God accessible and comprehensible to man.

Nevertheless, the practical result was that the God so earnestly sought seemed to recede farther into the distance with every fresh attempt to bring him down to earth. The theology which eventually proved to be triumphant and which, today, enjoys the prestige of a solid following was the one that had put the transcendence of God at the head of its whole program. To safeguard that tenet men were willing to sacrifice much—even the freedom of the will and the goodness of creation.

In many quarters the conviction became irresistible that the ultimate ground of the universe was beyond the reach of the human mind, and the general apathy of agnosticism made all further progress in that direction impossible. Science, omniscient, infallible, and brooking no contradiction, had put up the warning, "No

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Thoroughfare!"—and that had settled the matter for many whose hearts were hungering for the living God.

For it has become a settled conviction that it is a capital crime for the mind to trespass on forbidden ground. Practically all the confusion of thought, all the conflicts between science and theology, all the so-called crises in belief would have been avoided if all the engaging parties had but kept on their own side of the fence marking off the natural boundaries, and had refused to meddle with matters that were none of their business. Man has ever been careless about observing the truism that efficiency in one department of intellectual activity is no guarantee of a similar efficiency in another department of intellectual activity. A prince on one side of a line may make only an indifferent hewer of wood on the other side. In some matters a humble goat herd may be a better authority than a whole ecumenical council.

The modern mind will be scientific or nothing. And science has nothing to do with God. It was not an explosion of irreverent bravado, but a plain statement of fact, when the author of the *Mécanique Céleste* told Napoleon that he had no need of the hypothesis of God. For an astronomer to fold his hands at a celestial mystery and to say Kismet—this is so because

God wills it—is simply the abdication of astronomy. One may try to judge of the intentions of the creator by what seem to be the purposes of creation; but the causes to which the visible phenomena are traced have nothing to do with God. Scientists may be and often are ardent theists. A cloud of witnesses shows that scientific preeminence is thoroughly compatible with a Christian faith; Copernicus, Kepler, Newton, Faraday, Maxwell, Agassiz, Von Baer, Ohm, Joule, Maedler, Pasteur, Lord Kelvin, the Herschels, De Candolle, Von Liebig, Rob. Mayer, many of whom were strictly orthodox, were in no way handicapped by their religious beliefs. “When I was at Cambridge,” wrote Romanes, “there was a galaxy of genius in that department (mathematics) emanating from that place such as had never before been equalled. And the curious thing is that all the most illustrious names were ranged on the side of orthodoxy.”

But science, as science, is coldly and inevitably atheistic, and when it reaches the limits of its chosen province, permits its followers to say merely—*Ignoramus*, and hands the unsolved problems over to the philosopher. This is not due to perversity, but to the definite limitations of which the mind is conscious, imposed on it as a condition of intellectual progress. To a psalmist the heavens may declare

the glory of God and the earth and her treasures show his handiwork, to the devoutest mineralogist a splendid quartz crystal, the very triumph of nature's marvelous molecular powers, is nothing but a prism, with apparently hexagonal pyramids, of the hardness seven, belonging to the rhombohedral type, with weak double refraction under crossed nicols, made of silicon dioxide. And stars are so much gas, and the iris is a monocotyledon, and man is *homo sapiens*, a primate mammal, and God and man are of the same image. Lagrange's answer to the bon-mot of sceptical La Place was to the effect that nevertheless God, as a hypothesis, accounted for many things. Which was perfectly true, only, to "account for things" is rather the business of the poet and of the prophet, and they are abundantly able to lift this burden from the stooping shoulders of the less ambitious scientist.

One natural result of this division of labor in an age when the poet and the prophet were at a discount and when the scientist held the center of the stage, was a lurking, uneasy suspicion that God was, perhaps, nothing but an unnecessary hypothesis anyway.

And the recovery of God was, for many a mind, along the way pointed out by Jesus of Nazareth nineteen hundred years ago. Heaven was again made accessible via Palestine. What

wonder that men hailed the new christology as a deliverer from the house of bondage! Here was a veritable Ariadne's cord that promised salvation! And straightway "christology" became a word to conjure with.

Furthermore, this new interest, with all its overemphasis, afforded a long overdue relief from the entities and quiddities, the attributes and proofs, the absolute and the unconditioned, with which theology had been content to juggle for ages. The questions whether infants dying before baptism could be saved, whether there was a devil, whether this was the best possible world, whether truth was truth because God willed it, gave place to mightier matters about God's intimate relations to a suffering and aspiring humanity and the possibility of an approach between the two parties.

In these matters Jesus had spoken the delivering word. What he had taught bore the authority of truth, though it contradicted all the scribes and pharisees. The finest and deepest revelation we have concerning God came, as a matter of fact, through him. To convey this message from God to man constituted, as he believed, his very life-work. To reveal himself, to put himself at the center of his message, was utterly foreign to his habits of thinking. It will be more convenient to examine the content of this message later on

(p. 84, ff.); but it is well to bear in mind that the theology of Jesus—if with a somewhat violent stretch of words we may thus designate his opinions about religion—centered in God. The implications of this are so far-reaching and so subversive that many have refused to subscribe to what seems so simple and self-evident a statement. For this standard will tremendously effect our estimate of many sayings about things not divine as recorded in the gospels.

It is notorious what the Christian imagination and pious homage afterwards did with the authentic words; the New Testament furnishes abundant documentary evidence that quite early the tendency to shift the emphasis made itself felt even among those who were most interested in preserving the memory of Jesus and his wonderful words. In saying this we expose ourselves to the danger of being misunderstood in quarters where the finding of “tendencies” has lost all credit and where the fiction is still bravely exploited that Baur and company busied themselves with the very *caput mortuum* of criticism, done to death by careful scholarship and supplied with a convincing obituary by Lightfoot and others. Such corpses have a strange fatality about them in that they often revive when they seem buried for good. So, at least, it has happened with the tendenz-

theory. For it may be stated with the utmost confidence that if there is any one certain result which we owe to the comparative study of the gospel narratives it is the conviction that Jesus did not speak as the fourth gospel reports him to have spoken. To make Christ the central and controlling point of theology was perfectly in accord with the Johannine tradition, though it could be done only at the expense of the other traditions; as a matter of fact it meant putting the revealer in the place of the revelation. The message was lost in the messenger.

The central fact of the redemptive drama, the very key and *raison d'être* of the life and death of Jesus is the revelation that there is a loving God. This is the essence of the good news. A christian theology is impossible without the appreciation of the truth that it was Jesus who brought this news, and he who admits that is in no danger of ignoring or of underestimating the christological factors of redemption. But back of the whole scheme that culminates in the appearance and the work of Jesus is the moving force: "God sent his Son."

THE INFLUENCE OF PAUL

Whoever is, in any way, interested in a discussion of the place of Christ in the thought of today is obliged to begin with the influence

of the apostle Paul. Not only does the christian church owe to Paul practically all the stock in trade of christology, not only are the technical terms of theology essentially Pauline, but in our attempt to get at the real Jesus we shall find that we will have to fight our way, step by step, through a mass of obstructions that owe their existence in large part to his writings. It is an old story that Paul had come to introduce something new into the simple gospel. For a long time, and to an astonishingly large proportion of the early Christians—the judaizing element in general—Paul was looked upon as an arch-heretic.

It is not necessary to make a fault of this. Paul was, after all, a man of flesh and blood, not a coldly calculating machine, grinding out doctrines, such as some recent writers have pleased to describe him. The whole Pauline christology was built up to honor Jesus, not to bury him. That he was, in reality, buried was less the result of what Paul had laboriously thought out than the result of the theological vice of assuming that these forms, though they were sometimes woefully loose-jointed, were the final and perfect receptacles of divine truth. For centuries theology was pure idolatry, in which Paul supplanted all other claimants to the loyalty of believers. His writings supplied the standard of belief. There was

no other. What he said was final with the church. He was one of those fortunate, or unfortunate, men—Plato and Aristotle and Kant were others—who wield such a power over the intellectual activity of whole eras that even their most ludicrous blunders are surrounded with a sacrosanct aureola. The time is not yet past when the student of religion can find his dearest convictions about Jesus demolished with the supposedly unanswerable, “But what does the Bible say?” and find his mouth stuffed with—a quotation from the epistle to the Romans!

One is led to wonder what Paul himself would have had to say to this sort of procedure. He was not the kind of a man to refuse homage where homage was due; he was not above using the tricks of rhetoric himself. It is surprising what an amount of space is consumed in the exercise of logical sleight-of-hand (note the exegetical monstrosities in Galatians 3 and 4, Romans 4 and 10, and I Corinthians 9, with the rabbinical idea about the oxen!) But these were simply arguments addressed to individuals with their mental peculiarities, meant to drive home some definite truths. If he had foreseen that the day was coming when his own words would be given apodictic value, and when his personality was to overshadow and to supplant the very person whom to proclaim and

to explain was his whole life-work, he would, no doubt, have refused to dictate a single word. Those are least true to Paul's spirit who imagine that he has spoken the last word about God and about Jesus Christ and about sin.

For it was his one object to proclaim Christ and him crucified; to do anything else was, in his estimation, a sufficient reason for those terrible anathemas which he was the first to hurl against schismatics; everything else was but idle dross and empty sound. And yet the irony of history would have it that in the succeeding clash of warring minds the champion should get practically all the honors, and the cause championed should be forgotten. The benevolent Caesar obliterated his patrimony.

"When could they say, till now, that talk'd of Rome,
That her wide walls encompass'd but one man?"

So it happened in the history of the church.

The evidential value of what Paul believed and taught concerning Jesus is determined by his own personal experience. That experience had nothing to do with the historical Jesus. That may be, to many, a hard saying, but it is literally true. Paul begins where Jesus ends. The history of a man's influence may not begin until after his death, the history of the man himself ends with his death. The death on the cross is the starting point for Paul's the-

ology. And when the start was once made it proceeded in a direction which was sure to end, by and by, in what has been defined as a regular Christ-mythology. The doctrine of Christ's preexistence overpowered all interest in the details of the merely human life. Of this preexistent state Paul is sure—his conversion, the resurrection, the whole scheme of salvation is dependent upon its truth. Like all fundamental truths it is taken for granted. Paul does not argue the case; it is an axiom to be presupposed, and it is true, it must be true, because it explains so much that could not be explained in any other fashion.

Now it may be affirmed that no person who had stood under the spell of that wonderful life as it developed in the hill towns of Galilee, and which was cut short by that judicial murder in Jerusalem would ever have constructed or been able to construct the elaborate machinery which we hear creaking through some of the arguments which Paul employs to unite the heavenly Christ and the historical Jesus. The demand that is upon orthodoxy to accomplish this task is, even today, responsible for some marvelous manipulations. And Paul was a pioneer in the business.

The modern reader is always in danger of forgetting that Paul knew no "gospels" such as have come down to us. His work was done

long before the piety of the early church had collected and set in order, as Luke tells us, the narrative of that short life, tracing "the course of all things accurately from the first." The church was too busy to make literature; it was making life. So he was unable to check off his speculations and regulate them with any documents which might have carried weight comparable to that which he was accustomed to attach to the Old Testament. His persistent use of arguments drawn from that source shows what he would have done if he had had more than an ever so reliable tradition, based on the hearsay of men whom the fourth gospel, which was composed under Pauline influences, systematically represents as having misunderstood the Master's words.

With Paul it is a matter of pride, almost, that he did not know Jesus intimately, after the flesh. And faith in him had nothing to do with the actual message which formed the content of Q—the main source employed by the synoptists when they made their attempt to write "gospels". It would be simply impossible to deduce a Pauline theology from the gospel as proclaimed by Jesus. We shall find, on investigation, that Jesus did not much concern himself about the reasons for things in general and faith in particular; Paul is always trying to justify God's ways with man. Jesus

has no system of ethics, all lengthy discussions on the subject notwithstanding, no theodicee, no "plan of salvation," no philosophy of history, without all of which paulinism is utterly unthinkable.

In one way this independence over against the actual life facts was a priceless blessing, for it gave Paul an opportunity to prove to all coming times that faith in Christ is not contingent upon the acceptance of this or that detail of history, just as such details may fail to carry conviction, in spite of all their historical vouchers. There is no danger that Paul will ever be charged with disloyalty to his Master and Savior, now that history has proved his system to have been right and that of the judaizers to have been wrong. And yet he is satisfied to ignore vastly interesting matters, of which he must have heard discussions, matters which, to say no more, were at least as important as any theory about justification could possibly be. And the facts that he seemed to know absolutely nothing of the dogma of the miraculous birth, that the colliding accounts of the resurrection event gave him so little uneasiness that he didn't even take the trouble of showing why he believed in his transubstantiation idea, and that all along he could insist on the supremacy of Jesus Christ as Lord over all solely on the strength of his own

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wonderful experience and some fragmentary bits of tradition: all this makes his example a factor of inestimable value to the apologist of today when even the man in the street is beginning to suspect that the facts of history and the legends of pseudo-history fail to exhaust the meaning of things.

In most things the church has been willing to walk as a captive, chained to his chariot wheels; but it has refused to imitate his example of acting as a sovereign over the innumerable accidentals of history.

PAUL'S SOLUTION OF THE CHRIST-PROBLEM

The question as to what rank the exalted Christ (for none other has the least interest for him) occupies in Paul's system is a rather complicated one. For he was a manysided man, and fearlessly attacked problems which were sure to involve the most accomplished dialectician in a tangle of contradiction, some of which he noticed and tried to remove, while others were handed over to later times. It was an ominous legacy: what a mass of expositions and explanations and harmonizations has been piled up to smooth the way and connect the isolated peaks! Paul was a mortal, but the Pauline theology was inspired, in the premises, and the interpreters did what they thought their duty. The end was that the man was interpreted out of existence.

This is, obviously, not the place to discuss the various methods he used to help himself, but it will be necessary to mention a few of the more prominent facts to show that even he had his difficulties with the nature of the god-head—the puzzle that was soon to split christendom into fiercely fighting sections. Paul was perfectly innocent of the coming mischief, the trouble lay not so much with his explanations—man can but do his best—as with the subject. Still, he had dared to explain and justify God's ways, and when a man does that he is sure to invite trouble upon his head. It is not an extravagance to say that it was he who sowed the wind which soon developed into the whirlwind that tore the churches into fragments.

As already stated, to Paul Christ's preexistence was not something to be argued and established; it is assumed, without argument, needing no proof, perhaps admitting no proof, withal so certain that he is free to build up his whole system upon it.

But this preexistence did not necessarily involve, as one might suppose, the idea of the divinity of Jesus. As a learned Pharisee, versed in Alexandrian and Hebrew lore, he was perfectly at home in the mystical speculations about that Being through whom the world had been made and which eventually became the mouth-

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piece of God's messages to humanity. It was the peculiarly Jewish hope that sometime this Being would manifest itself on earth. The messianic hope and the doctrine of the logos, a word to be made flesh, together formed the one great subject for debate with all intelligent Jews who were not hopelessly entangled in the business of building a hedge around the law and of commenting on the comments of the original comments of the rabbis.

This Being, whatever it was, was distinct from God, and yet almost everything that could be predicated of God could also, in some sense, be applied to it. The times were ripe for God's messenger to appear, the kingdom was at hand. Even in the Gentile world there were vague anticipations, flashes of prophecy came from far-off lands like the coruscations of a hot summer evening. The nations had been asking wearily, Watchman, what of the night?

And lo, here are rumors of the wonderful deeds and the astonishing sayings of a Galilean teacher, Jesus of Nazareth. Whether he ever claimed to be the messiah outright is a question that is not so easily settled as some seem to imagine. Those who deny that he did are at present in a hopeless minority, but they have at least shown, now that the old proof-text method is on its last legs, that it is unsafe to

dogmatize about things that happened ages ago. However, the historical fact remains, untouched by any reasonable doubts, that it was as a messiah that Jesus was put to death. The ideals of many had been realized in him; many had hoped that it was he who would redeem Israel—it required no more than that vision on the road to Damascus and the subsequent study of what facts were accessible to convince the zealous Saul that these despised “Christians,” were right in their claims.

He was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, as he says in his defense before Herod Agrippa, but proclaimed the crucified Jesus as the glorified Christ. Investing the historical character with all the transcendent attributes of a supernatural being, he far outdid even the disciples in determining the lines along which the religion of Christ was to be developed.

Not that Paul was perfectly sure himself as to how this new investiture of Jesus with what were practically divine powers was to be justified. A careful reading of his letters cannot fail to show that occasionally his ideas about monotheism got a terrible jolt. He was first of all a Jew, then a Christian. His manipulations of the prepositions in, with, through, by, above, his anxiety to prove a God over all, his carefulness to distinguish between God and Christ shows that in his own mind there were

some difficulties about his explanation which were rather uncomfortable, and which he was unable to remove.

No one can tell what might have happened if the convenient and adaptable figure of speech "Son of God" had not offered itself as a key to the wards of this complicated lock. Indeed, it may confidently be asserted that without this phrase a goodly portion of his theology would never have been constructed. We are all, perforce, slaves to the letter, and it has ever been a waste of time to bemoan the inevitable; trouble arises only when we ignore or forget the condition of this bondage.

Here was a great truth that needed expression—perhaps the most momentous truth of which we can form any conception—that God can have an active and vital relation to his universe, that He is not far from each one of us, and that humanity can partake of His very nature. What formula could best express this relation? What set of words would leave the smallest number of false impressions? Where everything was but a mere approximation, which one was it that could boast of the greatest historical dignity, and appealed most intimately to the halting intelligence of man? The term Son of God best told the truth.

This required no lengthy, metaphysical argument to make it plausible; it was not the result

of subtle thinking; it was just the most natural way of stating the facts. The son was born (a "son" must be born, well understood!) and his name was Immanuel, God with us.

The point to be remembered in this connection is that "son of God" is, for a Christian, nothing but a figure of speech, as is, in very fact, every term drawn from human experience and relations and applied directly to God. At the risk of being misunderstood one is forced to say this even of the personality of God. What word or set of words can adequately describe Him? Most of the endless lucubrations about the metaphysical and the physical sonship that make so much christology a weariness to the flesh would have been avoided if this had been kept in mind.

Gunkel has given convincing proof that wherever the idea of sons of God is introduced in the Old Testament we have the strongest reasons for suspecting the influence of extra-israelitish, i. e., polytheistic religions. Pure monotheism has no room for the idea that God may have a son, or a father, for that matter. As for the term "mother of God," consecrated through long usage, that would strike many Christian believers fully as irreverent as the analogous, if frivolous "grandmother of God."

Procreation in any but a metaphorical sense breaks up the unity of the godhead. But the

objectionable term, inadequate as it was, had to be used if there was to be any progress in the work of accounting for the faith that animated the early church. Needless to say, a variety of ideas found shelter in this flexible phrase, ranging all the way from the legal fiction of adoption to the mythological efforts to establish a direct line of physical descent between God and the babe born of Mary. For any person who allows a figure of speech to run away with him is, like Voltaire's Habakkuk, capable of anything, even of creating genealogies.

With Paul the title "Son of God" oscillates between two points: 1. Christ is pre-existent, the son of God with power (Rom. 1, 4) of the same nature as God's, the image of the invisible God (Col. 1, 15) descended from Him, or adopted by Him, above all created beings in heaven or on earth. 2. He is also different from the Father, "and when all things have been subjected unto Him then shall the Son also himself be subjected to Him . . . that God may be all in all." (1 Cor. 15, 28). What we are to Christ, Christ is to God, (1 Cor. 11, 3), he is the medium of creation, but also the firstborn of all creation.

In the confusion of these and many other attributes one fact stands out clearly and significantly: however near Paul comes to identifying

the natures of God and of the exalted, glorified Christ, he cannot get his pen to write outright, Jesus Christ is God. (The solitary text, Romans 9, 5, may be discussed more profitably later on.)

A typical passage occurs in the chapter concerning things sacrificed to idols, I Cor. 8, 4ff. Here he takes the ground that though idols are mere simulacra, yet they are, after a fashion, something more, for they can even be counted, there are many so-called gods—and *there are many lords* (Paul had no occasion to deny the reality of other lords in the course of this argument)—“yet to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things and we unto him, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through him.”

No modern exposition could show more plainly than do these carefully chosen words that he is determined to distinguish between God the Father and Jesus Christ the Lord.

Such passages can be found by the score, even in arguments where the Pauline Christ-theology is most highly developed, and they speak volumes for the natural reserve and carefulness of a man who often gives the impression that he is all fire and impetuosity, whose main object is to carry his point.

THE USE OF THE TERM GOD AS APPLIED TO
JESUS

For the sake of completeness it will be well to group the passages in the New Testament in which the term God is directly applied to Jesus.

That divine powers and prerogatives are given to him is not a matter for debate. And it may be said, quite properly, that where we have the thing we need not quarrel about names. But the fact to be noted is that in naming Jesus the various writers generally and instinctively use other predicates than that of God.

The fog of sundry theological controversies, now happily dissipated in civilized parts, has somewhat obscured the real state of affairs, and so the matter became the subject of careful study. The results have been tabulated quite systematically.

These tables show that among some sixty odd appellations given to the Master in the whole New Testament "Jesus" leads, being found in 610 places. Then follow "Christ" (272), "Lord" (193—of which the Pauline literature supplies 150), "Son of God" (77), "Son of Man" (73), "Our Lord," with the addition Jesus Christ or Christ Jesus, etc. (63), "Teacher"—in many cases but a polite form of address (40), "King" (25), "Savior" (10).*

* Vid. Studierstube 1905, p. 20 ff.

It must always remain a question in the minds of many whether such word-counting and word-weighing is worth the time expended upon it, invariably so with those who prefer to depend upon their own intuitions and then talk about the "destructive results of criticism" and sneer at theology made in Germany or Holland or Switzerland, as though its willingness to take infinite pains proved it to be of an inferior sort, especially when its conclusions turn out to be a trifle unconventional. The fact is that no science worth the name is possible without an enormous amount of just this kind of painful drudgery. The main business of science is not to be interesting, but to be accurate even at the risk of becoming dry as dust.

But the importance of early Christian usage in the matter of the naming of Jesus abundantly justifies this labor in this particular direction. There is no indication anywhere that it is going to obscure the weightier matters of the law and the gospel.

It is notable in the circumstances that the term God as applied to Jesus is found to have been used but six (or five) times.

(1) John 20, 28. "Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God." The value of this saying will be determined by what is known to have been the consistent policy of the writer of the fourth gospel with regard to

the personality of Jesus. That the term should be used only once, and then put into the mouth of a Thomas, at that, is most surprising. The problem with John would be to explain why he does not use it oftener. Another factor which will have to be considered in weighing this section of the gospel is given in the conclusion, upon which there seems to be a pretty general agreement, that its present shape is largely due to the quarrel which the early church had with the docetics. Otherwise the risen Jesus would probably never have been represented as inviting the touch of the incredulous Thomas—only ten verses after the *noli me tangere* to Mary: "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to the Father." The only reasonable conclusion seems to be that in the interval Jesus has ascended unto the Father. The ascension had not robbed the body of Jesus of its tangibility, and that surely would put a quietus on any attempt to show that he was only a seeming man, with a make-belief body. Needless to say, this ascension has, if anything, added to the supernatural attributes of this veridical body. It should also be noted that the "my" of Thomas modifies and restricts the meaning of "God." The writer does not make the unqualified assertion that Jesus is God.

(2) Titus 2, 13. "Looking for . . . the glory of the great God and our Savior Jesus

Christ." Marginal rendering: "of our great God and Savior." That it is absolutely useless to base any argument upon this verse either for or against the identity of Jesus Christ with the Father is vouched for sufficiently by the fact that interpreters are hopelessly divided as to the meaning of the connective "and." The question will never be decided on grammatical grounds so much as by the dogmatic prepossessions for or against the doctrine of Christ's deity. A reference to any standard commentary will show that the evenly balanced considerations will somehow incline on the side of the writer's beliefs. Commentators are human beings, with whom the wish is often father of the thought. The main argument on the one side centers on the employment of one article for the two appellatives; on the other side the general usage of the New Testament is made determinative. The personal equation of the respective writers must always be considered in settling the question to one's own satisfaction.

(3) 2 Peter 1, 1. "The righteousness of our God and (the) Savior Jesus Christ." The unmistakable marks of this epistle are decisive for placing the date of composition in a time when the apostolic tradition concerning Jesus was beginning to be colored by the doctrinal interests of the second century. The late date of this epistle speaks strongly for the identifi-

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cation of "our God" and "the Savior Jesus Christ"; it also supplies a reliable criterion when one wants to estimate the value of the phrase as evidence of apostolic usage. For the rest, the grammatical difficulties of interpretation involved in (2) reappear in the discussion of this passage.

(4) Jude, verse 25. "To the only God our Savior." This reference is included to illustrate the usage of the pastoral epistles which introduces the term savior as descriptive of God, found elsewhere only in the Magnificat (Luke 1, 47.) "My spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Savior." That Jesus cannot be meant is plain from the context: "To the only God our Savior, *through Jesus Christ our Lord* be glory, etc."

(5) In Hebrews 1, 8, the writer applies an Old Testament passage (Psalm 45, 6f.) directly to Jesus. Christ, the Son, whom all the angels of God are to worship, supplants God; "but of the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever, etc." In other words, the words of a nuptial ode, written to magnify the marriage of a king to a beautiful bride—a secular song that somehow got into the canon—are directly put into the mouth of God to predicate deity of the Son. The introduction of the epistle is sufficient evidence that the writer did not identify the Son, through whom God spoke,

with very God himself. The passage under consideration is only a quotation, more or less apposite.

(6) We now come to the last and most important case, Romans 9, 5. "Of whom is Christ as concerning the flesh who is over all God blessed forever amen." This may be called the classic illustration of the importance of commas. What those words mean to the reader will depend entirely upon the method of punctuation he is pleased to adopt. The original texts, lacking commas and periods, give no aid in deciding the controversy. Is Christ here called God over all, blessed forever? Or are these words simply a doxology? It is purely a matter of interpretation; and the history of this interpretation, a most wearisome affair, is calculated to make the unsophisticated lay reader ask, why so much agitation about nothing? He cannot be blamed for refusing to thresh over the old straw yet once again. Sanday and Headlam give a cursory account of this history (International Crit. Com., *in loco*) and their guarded and qualified conclusion is that "throughout there has been no argument which we have felt to be quite conclusive." The following points deserve consideration:

a. The usage of Paul, with whom, certainly, the ascription of such words to Christ would be abnormal.

b. The usage of the fathers—they generally, like most expositors of the earlier days, referred the words to Christ.

c. The astonishing suddenness with which Christ is made God *over all*—which is the last thing Paul, or for that matter, any other New Testament writer would think of.

d. The appropriateness or inappropriateness of a doxology in this place, both sides finding their champions.

The upshot of the whole controversy is nothing but a grand Perhaps. Perhaps Paul had Christ in mind, perhaps he was true to his principle recorded in all his epistles, and refused, here, too, to break his rule. At the most, the words would be the expression of a dithyrambic mood, forming the climax of one of his most exalted declarations, which might well end with a fervid Amen! That the statement is a deliberate pronouncement concerning the identity of Christ and God few would care to assert.

It is rather significant that in every case where, by any stretch of interpretation, the term God is applied to Jesus, the risen, glorified Christ is meant; i. e., the practice finds no justification in the usage of the disciples during the life-time of the Master. The conviction that found utterance in these and similar terms was the result of subsequent thinking, of a constructive theological tendency, and as such

was all but certain to intrude itself into the records of the early church.

As an argument to be used by those who are interested in establishing the position that the New Testament writers refuse to attribute deity to Christ, the value of these facts is, of course, nil; but they show, emphatically, how circumspect these annalists and workers and thinkers were when it became a question of substituting the newly found messiah for the God of their fathers. In this, as in so many other matters that seem so strange if not inconceivable to the western mind, they remained true to the instincts of their Jewish nationality. A pure Greek or a pure Hindoo, explicating the mysteries of a Greek or an Indian Christ, would have found his difficulties and his scruples in entirely different quarters.

THE DIFFICULTIES OF PAUL'S POSITION

Paul's task was to unite the heavenly Christ and the earthly Jesus, and that could be done only at the expense of the one or the other. That he failed to complete the task is proved by the history of heresies and contradictory christologies which are not the most engaging episodes in Christianity. It is most significant that Paul could be quoted in opposite camps, as holding mutually exclusive opinions.

The dilemma he had to face may be stated

thus: If Christ was to save man from sin he had to be true man, with a definite, real experience of the power of sin. If Christ was "very God of God" he could not have had such an experience. And yet humanity was to be saved—through Christ, the Christ that was more than man! This contradiction shows that even a Paul found it impossible to unite God and man, and we shall have to reconcile ourselves to the fact that, in the matter of the incarnation, he failed to reach solid ground. His own confession was, "For now we know in part."

The nearest he came to a solution was in the much discussed Philippians 2, 6-11. Here was a splendid opportunity to express himself unequivocally on the nature of Christ. The involved turn "who, existing *in the form of* God etc." would never have occurred to anyone whose belief could be expressed in a simple "who, being (a) God—became a man." The exhortation is that the Philippians cultivate a humble, lowly frame of mind. If the self-emptying process of one having the form of God and sharing equal honors with God is a good example (have this mind in you—) *a fortiori*, the incarnation of a God would have been a better example. Or, to approach the subject from the other side: supposing that the real humanity of Christ was the issue—and with Paul the becoming "flesh" was a real de-

basement—who would be satisfied with speaking of *the form* of a slave, *the likeness* of men, and being found *in fashion as* a man? Doesn't the language show that Paul had something in reserve which could not be predicted of a real man, or of a real God? Was not this another one of those unfathomable mysteries?

Later generations, that could not boast of producing men with the splendid acumen of a Paul, could hardly be blamed for taking refuge in docetism, in which the real humanity evaporated into a specter, in which the manhood of Jesus was but an illusion and a sham; or for getting enmeshed in the doctrine of the gnostics, according to which the "heavenly Christ" inhabits the man Jesus for a while and forsakes him just before death. Both notions were objectionable, for the one involved a fraud and the other involved a mere makeshift. But they were almost respectable compared with the later absurdity which flowered out in the idea that Jesus was both, at one and the same time, God who could know and do and be all things, and man who could not know and do and be all things. One could at least attach some meaning to the docetic and gnostic positions.

At all events, according to this passage in the epistle to the Philippians the elevation to divine glory did not, as a matter of fact, take place until after the death. "He humbled him-

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self, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. *Wherefore* also God highly exalted him." The exaltation follows the debasement. Here the distinction becomes prominent, once more, and is carried through to the end. Jesus receives a new name, the name Lord, which is the badge of his new sovereignty, which forms the content of the new creeds and all this is done—"to the glory of God the Father:" so Paul concludes and saves his monotheism. The road was a difficult one, but it ended aright.

This predicate of Lord (kyrios) is more than a polite or dignified form of address. As a title it is destined to receive a religious significance. Everything we associate with worship, with adoration is given with this name.

Of course, this name, which is over all names, was bound to cast its rays of glory over the records which we owe to the loyalty of the early church. Virgin-birth stories were inevitable in the circumstances. Anyone acquainted with the penchant of antiquity for such stories and with the naive willingness of the human imagination to account for anything unusual in an unusual way, would find it harder to explain the absence of any efforts in this direction than their appearance, in so beautiful and dignified a setting, in the Christian documents. Where a virgin-birth is missing—

—John seems to know nothing of it—the idea of the incarnate Logos, which is God, more than takes its place.

In the phrase Jesus Christ, the Lord, is couched not only the original creed of the new church, but it supplies the starting point for the theology of a new cult. We are here on the track of a new movement. Paul foretells the time when all knees shall bow at that name. The first person who did that after the death of Jesus—during the lifetime the act of worship was hardly to be distinguished from a specially reverent form of homage and greeting—marked the birth of that new religion which to this day the majority of Christians will admit to be the only true and legitimate Christianity, the Christianity which accepts Jesus Christ as the object of religion.

Paul's letters record the attempt to bridge the hiatus between the old religion and the new by means of a theology, and to justify the innovation. It was, in the nature of the case, a hard task; but no man was better equipt to undertake it, and it is highly improbable that the human mind can get much nearer to a solution of it than he did.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE EASTER STORIES

What part did the belief in the resurrection of Jesus play in this new movement? This

might be answered in a single word: it is not at all stretching things to say that without this belief, the Christian church would never have been born. A Christianity is possible without it; historical Christianity is unthinkable without it.

The documents of the New Testament were all composed under the influence of the conviction that the cross and the tomb had been vanquished and that Jesus lived in a physical sense. There is not a single exception. It is a mistake to imagine that at least the primitive gospel of Mark is free from the compelling charm which this fixed idea exerted on the members of the early Christian community. The second gospel is much more than a bald narrative of what happened during the lifetime of Jesus. We may refuse to speculate on the mooted question of the lost conclusion; but its very introduction reveals the theological tendency: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." As we have seen, Paul's interest lies in the aggrandizement of the risen glorified Christ. And a John without the miraculous element that culminates in the resurrection from the grave would be like the proverbial Hamlet with Hamlet left out entirely.

It would be misleading to say that the gospels are the creation of the early church, and it

would be inaccurate to say that the church is the product of the gospels; both church and gospels are the precipitate (the one through Paul and the others, indirectly, through the band of disciples) of that atmosphere that was charged with the belief in the continued, post-mortem presence of Jesus. Jesus was daily proving his power as the very Son of God; the church was a living testimony declaring him to be such, with power, "through the resurrection from the dead."

This is the all but unanimous opinion of the students of all schools.

With the birth of the new church came a new worship. This worship centered, naturally, in the risen Lord. "One effect of the resurrection was to develop so exalted a conception of Christ in the Church that homage which cannot be distinguished from worship, came to be addressed to him." (Hasting's Bible Dictionary, article 'Worship.')

Suggesting that, as a matter of fact, it was the belief in the resurrection which effected this revolution rather than the resurrection itself, which quite early met its deniers, we cannot see how else the Christian religion is to be explained. All other attempts have met the same fate which overtook Gibbon's famous, or rather notorious, "causes." He, it will be recalled, was content to believe that the Christian

faith vanquished the other established religions for five reasons. These were: 1. The zeal of the Christians. 2. The doctrine of immortality. 3. The miracles attributed to the church. 4. The purity of the Christian morality. 5. The political power of the Christian state. All these he, indeed, admitted to be but secondary causes, and history, confessedly, has nothing to do with any others; but even on his plan he failed to go back far enough. There were powerful principles, beliefs, standards, influences, purposes, but all of them, put together, would have failed to explain Christianity without the life of Jesus.

It must be understood, however, that this conviction that Jesus had risen, taken as a historical fact, rests on quite different grounds from that which supports any theory of the resurrection proper, not to mention any bodily coming out of the tomb on the third day.

There are few controversies that have suffered from worse confusion than the one dealing with the resurrection of Jesus. On the one hand are those who insist that if Jesus did not (bodily) rise from the tomb "our faith is in vain." On such an assumption giving up the belief in the empty tomb is equivalent to a denial of the central fact of Christianity. It is an honored and honorable company of intelligent and consecrated men that have drawn

upon all the resources of scholarship and piety and tradition to establish this position.

On the other hand are those who are unable to admit that the documents warrant such a belief, much as they might like to accept it. With them it is simply a question of evidence, and they aver that the evidence is not strong enough. And in support of their view they point to a mountain of difficulties that stands in the way of making the traditional belief plausible. They will, as a matter of course, insist that Christianity rests on a rather precarious foundation if it rests on a tomb, be it empty or not.

It is only in recent years that one has been able to study the matter objectively, without incurring the acrid opposition of those defenders of the faith who were prone to look upon all negative results as the outgrowth of skeptical prejudice. It used to be the fashion to asseverate that those who denied the reality of the physical resurrection did so simply because they had no use for miracles. But the very fact that the negative school inevitably substituted one set of difficulties by another soon made that fashion supremely ridiculous. It became evident to all parties that there was no getting rid of mysteries. It only remained to decide which explanation was most in accordance with the data available. The tactics that

depended on calling all vision theories fraudulent, mythical, hypocritical, delusive, utterly failed to discredit the various objections made to the traditional belief. It was discovered that calling names settled no arguments. Also it was discovered that the theory of deliberate hardening of hearts, and selfwilled blindness ran counter to all psychology. Men do not shut their eyes to obvious truth—because they cannot do so.

One fact stands out clearly, whatever a patient textual criticism will establish in the end: it is only as a matter of faith that the man of today will accept the resurrection of Jesus. If he is not willing to acknowledge the life of the Lord as a continuous presence in his own soul no amount of documentary evidence, and be it a hundred times more reliable than the evidence in hand, will drive him to the conclusion that Jesus came out of the tomb. He will say, "If I see a man living he need give me no evidence that he was born." Anyway, a resurrection nineteen hundred years ago is far from being a proof that Christ is living today.

Now it is not strictly accurate to say that this is a belief in the resurrection. By resurrection is generally meant the restoration to life of what had died—the body. "I believe in the resurrection of *the body*" is redundant.

It is only the body that can be resurrected. Very few Christians today believe that the soul needs a resurrection. And in this connection it will be profitable to keep in mind that to the modern the term spiritual body is wellnigh meaningless, signifying about as much as a white sound or a ten pound imagination. Sir Oliver Lodge, who certainly cannot be cited as prejudiced against any of the authenticated facts of spiritism calls (*Substance of Faith*, p. 114) a spiritual body, "an unknown, hypothetical entity." Besides that, the life and the influence of Christ's spirit is not a matter that need be documented and verified as a fact in history, somewhat after the order of his death—the whole history of Christianity offers itself as a proof.

But the evidence for such a unique event as Jesus' coming out of the tomb, on the third day, will have to be something entirely different to carry conviction to an unbelieving mind. It may be that no amount of evidence, short of actual experience, would be sufficient to anyone who has elevated the inviolability of natural law into an axiom of his thinking. It surely is a rash statement, not supported by the facts, to say that the resurrection of Jesus, viz. from the tomb, on the third day, is one of the best attested facts of history. The voluminous polemical literature that has grown up around

this "fact" is abundant evidence that this is not so. Men do not write libraries to prove that once upon a time Hannibal crossed the Alps or that the sun shines in the sky.

As for the obnoxious contradictions in the records, though they have obviously received more than their share of attention, they are anything but disposed of as yet. It still remains true what Lessing wrote in 1778 in his polemic against Goetze on the Wolfenbuettel Fragments—a polemic that is as lively reading today, as such things go, as it ever was. The words are notable.

“Die Fragmente meines Ungenannten enthalten so mancherlei Dinge, welche mein Bischen Scharfsinn und Gelehrsamkeit gehoerig auseinander zu setzen, nicht zureicht. Ich sehe hier und da, auf tausend Meilen, keine Antwort. Meine Bewunderung, ein solches Werk nicht gekannt zu haben, kann nur durch die andere Verwunderung uebertroffen werden, wenn man mir zugleich auch ein Werk nennt, worin Das alles schon seine Abfertigung erhalten, welches ich eben so wenig gekannt haette. Auch eben so wenig noch kenne.”

That the rationalist argument to the effect that because the records contradict each other, therefore the resurrection report is incredible, is invalid, goes without saying, today.

Taken all in all it is most in keeping with

the actual condition of things to admit that the resurrection of Jesus is a mystery.

As a matter of history, the faith of the primitive church did not depend upon the conviction that the tomb was empty. The evidence for that part of the Easter story rests, mainly, upon the testimony of the women who went out of Jerusalem among the rock-tombs on the morning of the third day, and it is not at all certain that the women were correct in their inference that the Lord was risen, nor is it certain that they had made no mistake about the whereabouts of the actual tomb, among so many, where the body had been deposited. Some, we read, did not believe the story, anyway.

The faith of the church, of Peter and Paul and all the rest, depended upon the fact that Jesus was seen after his death. The empty tomb argument becomes prominent only in the controversial, apologetic literature of later times; when the apostles wanted to asseverate their belief that Jesus lived it was generally with an emphatic "and he was seen."

Accordingly the tomb retired into the background, and what happened there will probably never be settled, conclusively, on textual grounds. The subject will continue to exercise all who are interested in the doctrinal aspects of Christianity, but as a point to be settled

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by the historian it will, to judge by past results, be left hanging in the air. It is more in harmony with these actual results for us to say, as Du Bois Reymond once said in another connection, we do not know, and shall not know, this side of the grave, than to speak about "best attested facts in history."

The historical "evidence" may be the cause of the belief of some; it may be the result of that belief; it is too late to determine which. Lake (p. 252f.) puts the case thus: "Those who still believe in the necessity (that the resurrection must imply an empty tomb) are justified in making the same inference (made by the women and the evangelists) but those of us who believe that the resurrection need not imply an empty tomb are justified in saying that the narrative might have been produced by causes in accordance with our belief, and that the inference of the women is one which is not binding on us. The empty tomb is for us doctrinally indefensible and is historically insufficiently accredited."

Whatever be the explanation adopted by the reader, the fact remains that the disciples became convinced that their Lord lived. This conviction rested upon what was to them perfectly reliable evidence. There was always the possibility that they might have made some mistakes about the details; and if the body

never came out of the grave it would still be a gross exaggeration to say, it would be a monstrous falsehood to say, that the Christian religion is founded on a delusion or a fraud. But there was no doubt about the one essential.

When Jesus walked with them on the shores of Lake Tiberias and over the rolling fields of Galilee they had confided their most secret thoughts to him, and looked to him in their needs and obeyed his every gesture. His death on the cross had robbed them of the bodily presence; but now that they were certain that his death need not change their relations, what more natural than that they should continue to confide in him, to ask him for advice and guidance? The miracle of Easter—for such it was to them, and not a perfectly normal, anticipated event—translated their veneration for the Master into a higher power. We witness the birth of a new cultus in which the historical Jesus, who had died an ignominious death, is supplanted by the glorified Christ.

VALUE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT IN MARKING THE GROWTH

It is comparatively easy to trace the growth of this new practise through the pages of the New Testament. The fourth gospel gives a vivid picture of what the primitive community soon learned to think and teach about Jesus.

It is useless to speculate as to what may turn out to be the final and acceptable decision respecting the authorship of that wonderful gospel—agreement on the subject seems no nearer at hand than it was in 1792 when E. Evanson published *The Dissonance of the Four generally received Evangelists*; but even among those who feel constrained to accept the received tradition that *John* is a veritable apostolic writing there is practical unanimity that it is more valuable as a witness for what the early Christians thought about Jesus than as a reliable account of his life.

But *John* is not the only theologizing book in the New Testament. Even the most sober chronicler is unable to escape the influences of his time, and they will leave their traces in his record. The question concerning the amount of this influence is at present one of the hotly debated points in academic circles, where the synoptic problem has lost nothing of its old-time attractiveness. Every history, even the most cautious, presents a double record, one of the time which it describes and another of the time in which it was written; and the second, with all its elusiveness, may be the more important of the two. A third factor looms up with the reminder that a number of hands were busy and a number of objects pursued before some of these writings assumed the shape in which

they have finally come down to us. Each hand has left its mark, each purpose its hint. To unravel this skein of many colored silks requires patience, reverence, and sympathy, and, last but not least, the historic sense which can distinguish where a color-blind eye sees nothing but a monotonous gray.

The subject fairly bristles with questions. We simply advert, once more, to the fact that Mark himself was caught up in the currents of thought that swept over the Jewish world before the year 70. And what can be said of Mark must be said, only with assurance made a hundredfold more sure, of Matthew and of Luke. One illustration will be sufficient to characterize the spirit that controlled the writers.

The risen and ascending Jesus is represented by Matthew as giving his disciples final instructions concerning their subsequent life-work.

“And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” (Matthew 28, 18-20.)

In this so-called great commission the follow-

ing points stand out distinctly: a. Jesus is made to claim that all authority in heaven and on earth is henceforth vested in him. b. A definite program of making converts is announced. c. The whole world is to be, from now on, the theatre of missionary effort. d. Baptism is enjoined upon the new converts. e. This baptism is to be administered in the name of the Trinity. f. Jesus makes himself the center of the body of truth to be taught. g. He promises his spiritual presence to his disciples to the end of the time. ("The Lord is the Spirit.")

It may be that the command to baptize is an interpolation. The persistent use by Eusebius of a formula which omits all reference to baptism has been held to be a sufficient reason why we should suspect the accuracy of the manuscripts that have come down to us, and which all agree in inserting the command. But apart from this questionable point and the concurrent evidence that baptism in the early years of the church was in the name of Christ and not in the name of the Trinity, the passage is certainly a most astonishing pronouncement if it is assumed to come directly from the lips of Jesus. It contains, *in nuce*, the whole program of primitive Christianity. It is the charter of a full-fledged church, created to perpetuate the memory and the spirit of Jesus Christ, the Lord of all.

Nothing could more plainly show the purpose animating the writers, unless it be what is probably the original conclusion of the fourth gospel: "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written in order that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and in order that believing ye may have life in His name."

It is a task which still remains to be done thoroughly, to show how this one, confessed plan runs through the gospels, determining the choice of material and the use made of it, the omissions made here and there, the repetitions and inversions and variations abounding in the record. Such a study would establish convincingly how far the gospels are removed from being "lives of Christ." History, as a science, does not purpose the promulgating of definite beliefs or the religious betterment of its devotees; it just states available facts orderly and draws the necessary conclusions.

All this, however, does not alter the fact that, on the whole, the documents are sufficiently complete and thoroughly reliable as a record of how deeply the compelling character of Jesus has affected the apostolic church. They are priceless as witnesses to the influence of his words and example, and when the largest deductions have been made the impression still remains

that those writers got nearer to the real Jesus and his spirit than is possible to the most penetrating mind of today, equipt with all the *apparatus criticus* of the schools. This applies, too, to the letters of Paul. With all their speculation and dogmatizing, much of which is foreign to our habits of thought, they come out of the furnace of criticism practically unscathed. And whatever doubts may still attach to any picture of the Master, reconstructed out of the materials of the narratives, all such doubt dissolves into thin air when the matter of primitive Christian belief is discussed. The picture of the church, what there is of it, is trustworthy. What does it tell us about the new, to a Jew, revolutionary, departure that expresses itself in Christ-worship?

WORSHIP OF CHRIST

To begin with, a new element presents itself in the prayer that is offered to God "in the name of Jesus." John 16, 23f. establishes this usage: "If ye shall ask anything of the Father, He will give it you in My name; Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be made full." And verse 26: "In that day ye shall ask in My name," followed by the significant rejection of all thoughts of intercession, "and I say not unto you that I will pray the

Father for you; for the Father himself loveth you," and, consequently needs no transmitter to hear the prayer. Petitions to be heard for the sake of Jesus becomes possible only after the idea that the ineffable life has a propitiatory influence with God has become fully developed.

It was an enormous stride when the first Christian offered his prayer directly to the exalted Jesus. This act marked the beginning of a new religion, the Christian religion.

Such an event does not happen every day. Just now it is quite fashionable to exploit "new" religions, springing up over night and withering away, all of them, in the heat of the noon-day sun. Their discoverers do not lack imagination and enthusiasm. But what is new about them is generally also illusory, and what is of real value is old. In religion, the ever variable, the very genius of humanity expresses itself, and because humanity is homogeneous that expression will conform to a few definite types. Christianity is one of these.

This act of prayer to Jesus must be carefully distinguished from the practices of the disciples during the life-time of their Lord. Worship as then addressed to Jesus was purely an act of homage. The lepers prostrated themselves before the great healer, those who came to ask favors "worshipped," i. e., they assumed atti-

tudes of humble supplication. In the account of the temptation Satan is represented as requesting this act of prostration as a symbol of submission to his authority. This oriental custom had no religious significance. The same should be said of the petitions addressed to him in the natural course of things. When the dying malefactor on the cross says, "Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom," he was but making a request such as one man may make to another. There is no suggestion of worship in the modern sense of the word.

The death scene of Stephen (Acts 7.) gives one of the earliest illustrations of this new departure: "He looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. . . . And they stoned Stephen, calling out and saying, Lord (kurie) Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

It is important to remember the approximate date of this event. The *terminus ad quem* is given with the conversion of Saul. Just how long before that the martyrdom took place it is impossible to determine. It could not have been very long. The date of the conversion is given by Harnack as 30, Ramsay 33, von Soden 31-35, Zahn, Zeittafel, 35. If the substantial trustworthiness of Acts is assumed,

the distinct worship of Jesus can accordingly be authenticated as having been practiced at least as early as 35, i. e., at the most four or five years, more probably within a year or so, after the death of Jesus.

The possible objection that this prayer of Stephen may be nothing but a projection, into our account, of a later theological idea seems to be disposed of when it is ascertained that the story of Pentecost lacks the least hint at such a practise; and the argument of Peter would certainly not have suffered for the introduction of the thought that this Jesus, crucified by the Jews, had become the object of divine worship. The presence of that element would have been more easily explained, especially if, as it has been suggested (von Dobschuetz, *Ostern und Pfingsten*), the account of Pentecost is nothing but the description of another christophany. Romans 8 is sufficient warrant for that supposition. Outside of that, we meet ever and anon with the idea that the Lord is the Spirit, (2 Cor. 3, 17.) and as long as the Holy Spirit and the glorified Christ are interchangeable terms, as they obviously were for quite a while, the composition of such an account is quite within the limits of possibility. But the very hypothesis of such a composition will have to draw upon sufficient time to allow the development of at least the rudiments of

Christ-worship, which we find missing in the Pentecost account.

Our conclusion is that it is not unreasonable to suppose that Jesus was accorded the honor of genuine religious adoration very soon after his crucifixion.

Prayer to Jesus was the main custom of the first Christians distinguishing them from the rest of the Jews. Paul had authority to bind all those that called upon the name of the Lord Jesus. He greets the saints of Corinth, "with all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." "To call upon the name of ——" is a hebraism used in the Old Testament for worship of Jehovah.

We have already discussed the passage in which Paul predicts that all knees shall bow in the lordly name of Jesus; it was seen that the glory of God the Father still overshadowed everything else. We have also seen that the New Testament writers, with a practical unanimity, hesitate to apply to Jesus Christ any name that might be a virtual denial of their monotheism.

It remains to show that all this did not prevent the gradual growth of a prayer cultus in which Jesus assumes all the superlative prerogatives that are associated with an object of religious worship.

Stephen prays to the Lord that he may

forgive the Jews who are stoning him. This is a reminiscence, no doubt, of the scene on Calvary.

In 1 Thess. 3, 11 God the Father and the Lord Jesus are jointly invoked "to direct our ways unto you." In other words, Jesus assumes the function of a providence or celestial guide.

2 Thess. 2, 16 the office of the Holy Spirit is bestowed on Jesus: "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, . . . comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word."

The Gospel of John offers a variant of this thought when Jesus is represented as promising to send the Spirit who will do this work.

Paul's thorn in the flesh, which came as a messenger of Satan to buffet him, whatever it was, was held to be troubling him subject to the will of the sovereign Christ: "Concerning this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me." And then a veritable though unfavorable answer to these prayers is recorded: "And he hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee." (2 Cor. 12, 8 and 9.)

In the later apocalyptic writings the Lamb, which is the slain Jesus, is worshipped.

And the conclusion of 2 Peter gives, after a description of the *dies irae*, a doxology in which Jesus actually supplants God: "To our Lord

and Savior Jesus Christ be the glory both now and forever. Amen." Compare with this John 5, 23: "That all may honor the Son *even as they honor the Father.*"

Pliny's letter to the emperor Trajan (A. D. 107.), one of the most valuable documents bearing on the usages in the primitive church, records that the whole fault of the accused Christians was that they were wont to meet together on a stated day before it was light, and sing among themselves alternately a hymn to Christ, as to God, *quasi deo*.

Finally, 2 Clement begins, "Brethren, we ought so to think of Jesus Christ as of God." The barriers have been demolished, the fine distinctions have disappeared.

WHAT CAN WE ASCERTAIN CONCERNING JESUS?

THE NEGATIVE SIDE

And now, after establishing the fact of Jesus-worship in the apostolic community, we shall have to face the all-important question: Did Jesus in any way encourage such a tendency? Can he be taken as an authority for this practice? Can we infer from his recorded words that he anticipated or intended a development in worship along this line?

It might be less disconcerting to many if such question marks were blandly ignored. Such marks used to be considered the sign of the

beast. A sense of security counsels evasion. To use the language of romanticism "the devil walks with us. He comes to us a real person, copper-colored face, head a little on one side, forehead knit, *asking questions!*"

For here is the parting of the ways and we shall have to follow the one or the other. The one path, if followed without wavering, will end in the discovery of practically the whole christology, ready-made, in the recorded words of Jesus. The other path is shorter, less easy, and ends in a modest, but decided *non licet*. It involves us in the whole *Leben Jesu* discipline. The fundamental question is, What can we find out about Jesus, the man of Nazareth?

The reader need hardly be reminded that to the biblical scholar of the present age the first way indicated is practically impassable, for it is choked up with the rank growth of spiritual adaptations, harmonizations and compromises. It is, in very truth, a winding way. Here may be found, in full flower, the idea that Jesus must have planned everything from the beginning, here flourish the orchids of theological speculation: that the man Jesus could be ignorant of what must have been known to him as God, that the disciples must have misunderstood his words, that only that is true and catholic which has always, everywhere, been believed by everybody, that providence can permit no

blunders in the education of the human race, that ten thousand words spoken in an inspired tongue must surely be worth more than five words of understanding. This way leads through the tropical garden of the Gospel of John.

It is only here and there that the second, shorter path crosses the first. In other words, abandoning the figure before it becomes too cumbersome, the critical method only occasionally busies itself with the material which formed the main stock-in-trade of the traditional school, prophecy, anticipations, miraculous knowledge, providential hardening of hearts, disciplinary blindness, and the synthetic homilies extracted from the Bible.

The critical method has its own, all but insuperable difficulties. These do not grow out of the obstructions piled up by fear and despair and a sense of solicitous loyalty to what has been received from the fathers. For here, as elsewhere, it is still pertinent to ask: "Who ever knew of the truth to be put to shame in an open encounter with error?"

The greatest difficulty grew out of the necessity of making the most exactly of those elements which the gospel writers were most liable to overlook. As has been noted, their energies went into the reproduction of the Christ as he appeared to the consciousness of the young

church, history being their last aim; whereas we are interested in getting behind this picture to the veritable Man of Nazareth.

He who says that this is a distinction without a difference thereby admits, in so many words, that the arch-problem of the New Testament does not exist for him, and he will naturally wonder at all this hair-splitting of the ingenious critic—if he does not just condemn it all in the lump as a wicked perversion.

Now there have not been wanting all but compelling voices to tell us that the quest is hopeless. To try to get at the mind in Jesus is held, in some circles, equivalent, for difficulty, to reading the riddle of the universe, the assumption being that we can no more read what was in him than a quadruped can read what is in us. The questions which Jehovah hurls out of the whirlwind at Job are directly applied to Jesus, and it is expected that, like Job, the modern scholar refrain from being too curious. And this caution is certainly in order. Reverence is the first condition of knowing the truth. Greatness is always incomprehensible to mediocrity. In Jesus Christ were elements of purity and godlikeness to which our lives respond but faintly. Of all the theories concerning the life of Christ that one is probably the least profitable which assumes that the secret of Jesus will ever be laid bare by the dissecting knife

of the critic, though there is one other that runs it hard for gratuitous uselessness, namely the one which takes it for granted that all one needs to do to get at it, is to read the gospels by the light of nature. The subject is not just a matter of so many texts to be quoted pro or con any given conception of Jesus' personality. And where the devoted disciples stumbled we shall probably fail to reach finality. We shall never know what was in the mind of the Master. There is one consolation: it is not necessary that we should.

The picture of Jesus as projected upon the pages of scholarship is, confessedly, but a silhouette, giving the barest outlines; all the fine nuances, the lines that reveal character, the smile of sympathy, the fire of zeal, the penetrative eye, are hidden in the blackness of our ignorance. The ordinary methods of psychology fail us here, and "ideal" reconstructions are not especially noted for their verisimilitude. Anyway, they belong to the province of the poet, not to that of the scientist.

What we do not know about Jesus is indeed appalling. And the more is said, with an air of certainty, about matters which our mature judgment calls uncertain, the darker becomes the darkness.

The record, on the most favorable hypothesis, is a mere fragment. There are also

many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written. Thus at least one thoughtful writer puts the matter. Reconstructing an extinct species from a fossilized bone, as paleontologists are sometimes credited with doing, were no harder task than a solution of the problem given with the lost elements of Jesus' life

And what has survived, what has been recorded, gives little more than a dry chronicle of events mixed with gnomic sayings and discussions about their meaning. This record is written, for the most part, in the language of a generation that believed in diabolical possession, stars that could drop to earth like over-ripe figs, the end of the world, miracles that were so much thaumaturgy, the "manifest destiny" of a specially chosen nation, theophanies, angelologies, virgin births.

Furthermore, a translation of a transcription of a tradition, carried together from various and varying sources by men not one of whom had seen or heard Jesus, can hardly be said to present a very imposing mass of evidence.

The work done with this scanty material is one of the triumphs of the human mind. The negative aspect of some of the results have

blinded many to the fact that they are an enduring monument, not to scholastic vagaries and mistaken theories—they get no monuments built for them—but of what patience will accomplish when applied to the task of piecing together sadly mutilated bits of a far-off past. The story of the synoptic problem belongs to the same chapter which records the discovery of Neptune and the deciphering of the Rosetta stone. The Ur-markus and the procession of redactors ticketed with algebraic symbols may not be very impressive when they emerge from the study into the light of common day, but to sneer at the work done, as some who also love the truth have allowed themselves to do, betokens a total blindness to some of the most puzzling difficulties encountered in a careful study of the life of Christ.

The positive results reached have more than justified the infinite pains taken. Nor can it be said that the work is finished today. There are “problems” which will sorely try the steel of the doughtiest discoverer to come.

It may not be useless, it will at least help to prevent that note of finality which voices itself in apodictic statements about what *must* be, to mention a few of the outstanding unsolved riddles.

For one thing, it has not yet been fully settled what proportion of the records is “the-

ology," and what can, in a large sense, be called "history."

The order and the independence of the gospels, though an enormous amount of ingenuity has been brought into action, and though the "sources" are slowly assuming some definite form, are still largely hypothetical.

The chronology is still a jumble. Even such elementary things as the dates of the birth and of the death of Jesus are full of snares.

Dalman and A. Meyer are practically the only ones whose researches in the language spoken by Jesus—surely a *sine qua non* of correct interpretation—have become common property.

The Son of Man controversy is only at its beginning.

The investigations in "the mind in Christ" are the first timid attempts to ally psychology with biblical criticism. The pioneers Baldensperger, Adamson, and Schwartzkopff would be the first to admit that.

With the eschatology of Jesus comes a troop of attendant question-marks about the kingdom, the messiah, and the parousia.

That the tendency theories and the vision hypotheses are not as good as dead and buried, as some had fondly imagined and triumphantly proclaimed, can be verified by a most cursory glance into the present-day literature on the resurrection.

Who will speak the delivering word about the miracles, the Gadarene swine, the demoniacs, the blasted fig-tree? The so-called free-thinkers?!

And the Johannine problem is still with us, although the various schools are at last beginning to cultivate a cordial frame of mind.

Need it be said that, in the nature of the case, it is characteristic of problems that something be known about them? We are not trying to show that scholarship is in a way to commit suicide; but the indications are that no theological Alexander need weep tears at the borders of so many undiscovered countries.

The whole *Leben Jesu* discipline has split into a multitude of separate specialties which, in their complexity, are absolutely beyond the grasp of a single mind. To write anything approximating a real Life of Christ would turn out to be a task for collaborative effort, like an encyclopedia or a dictionary. In all candor it must be said that no man with scientific pretensions would think of making the venture today.

And with all this infinite amount of labor, taken at its worthiest, we get little more than the shell, the mummy. This is a painful situation for the Christian student. How the heart yearns for a glimpse of the true Jesus, the friend of man! Do we feel that hunger when

we face the coldly critical, dissective and anti-septic results of scholarship? We feel it no less when we see what the unbounded loyalty of a John has made of him. And what the theologies have done to complete the havoc has filled many a simple soul with a pathetic and agonizing longing; we would see Jesus and are given a composite photograph of what the men of sixty generations—thought he was!

It was inevitable that loud voices should be heard, insisting on the validity, for living men, of the living witness of Jesus Christ in the personal (and why not, then, in the national?) experiences that make up the history of Christianity. It is, after all, but a weighing of opinion against opinion. Surely today's thinking men, the living epistles of the church, have a message as important as any delivered to us from the past? God's revelation has not suffered bankruptcy, thus far. If Schleiermacher and his school had never written a word, if Ritschl had never been born, the very genius of Christianity would, in time, have forced itself through and beyond the shell of documents, and taken up its parable against the wordcramming and the microscopic and micro-tomic laboratory theology. When all has been said, when every stray bit of information recorded in the extra-canonical literature has been made to contribute its mite to the grand total:

"What do you read, my Lord?—Words, words, words!" And the sober, practical sense of the Christian will indorse the sentiment in the preface of Johnson's Dictionary: "I am not yet so lost in lexicography as to forget that words are the daughters of earth, and that things are the sons of heaven."

The earthly life was lived, was only a memory, when its awful significance dawned upon the consciousness of man. And then it was too late to ask questions, and to take notes. There had been no time to make records while Jesus lived, and the kingdom, where chronicles were useless, was fast approaching. When, at last, the many took it in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those things which had been fulfilled, there was sure to be confusion.

To assume that the lost or unrecorded passages out of this life might have added much to our knowledge and explained why the early church found it so easy to elevate Jesus into the theological Christ, is about as profitable as the theory that the lost manuscripts of the gospels must have been infallible. That was the last ditch in the fight about verbal inspiration. To expect much help from the discovery of new material is a council of desperation. It will not help us.

To indicate how grave the situation is, in spite of all our well-meant efforts to strain

the meaning of the smallest point, and to show how little meaning there is to the general nervousness felt whenever the least elimination is suggested, we need only remind ourselves that we do not even know, for a certainty, what Jesus believed concerning the resurrection of the dead. Did he teach a general resurrection? Luke 14, 14 represents him as speaking of the recompense in the resurrection of the just, and in Luke 20, 35f. we have the statement about the sons of the resurrection, who are "accounted worthy to attain to that world, and the resurrection from the dead," neither marrying nor being given in marriage. To quote the words of certain parables in favor of a more settled opinion will not solve the difficulty.

One avenue of approach to the mind of Jesus seemed to open with the suggestion that the post-exilic literature of the Jews, the apocalypses and other contemporaneous productions ought to be studied more carefully. Jesus grew up in the atmosphere which ripened these fruits of the speculative mind. He was familiar with these matters. He could not escape their influence. Didn't the book of Baruch, the Psalms, and Daniel mightily impress his imagination? Could he not hold his own against the pharisees who were always quoting the saying of the rabbis, meeting them on their own level?

And yet the hope at their hand to reconstruct his world is a tantalizing will-o'-the-wisp. This literature sheds a flickering, fitful light on the New Testament, to be sure, but we venture to say that for a study of the mind in Jesus it is a most unprofitable, disappointing source of information. The whole mass of rabbinical learning is like the proverbial haystack, and it will never be a very popular life-work for many to search for the authentic needle it no doubt contains. The distinctive thing about Jesus is not what he inherited or borrowed, but what he possessed over and above his contemporaries and his countrymen.

This implies no strictures on the splendid work of those scholars, from Scherer down to Bousset, who have gone through this sheer interminable pile of learning. We can never have too clear a background for the figure of the Lord. It is only as a key to the understanding of the personality itself that this work will always be found wanting.

WHAT CAN WE ASCERTAIN CONCERNING JESUS?

THE POSITIVE SIDE

It may be a positive relief to some to turn from all this to a statement of the facts which stand out as reasonably well authenticated.

There are some things we know. Jesus was not a myth. The denial of Kalthoff and others,

that such a person as Jesus of Nazareth ever lived involves such a *tour de force* in the interpretation of documents and such a multiplication of incredible hypotheses that it will never be taken seriously by those who have acquainted themselves thoroughly with the available material. In face of this denial the old position of the apologetic theologians is still perfectly sound: it is absurd to imagine, seriously, that any man or any set of men should ever have been able to invent such a character and make him speak as he is reported to have spoken. Such a supposition would call for as great a miracle as the emergence of a real Jesus Christ into history. It means doing violence to all the canons of research. It cannot draw upon a shred of evidence to make itself passably presentable in the council of historians. It only needs to be stated to be condemned. It was profitable that the denial should be made, in a dignified way, by men who commanded a hearing in circles competent to handle the subject, for it occasioned a renewed examination of the very foundation of the Christian faith, an examination which each generation is bound to make for itself. No age has the right to take its faith for granted. It must be earned and fortified with reasons that are constantly open to revision.

In this case, once more, the ancient landmarks

were found to be unremoved. As was said long ago: it would take a Jesus to invent a Jesus.

What, then, do we know, beyond a reasonable doubt?

We know that the parents of Jesus belonged to the so-called middle class. He was a Galilean (hence the occasional surmise that he may have been, not a Jew, but an Aryan, the Galileans being a mixed race with its roots in Babylon). He was probably born in Nazareth. It was there that he grew into manhood among brothers and sisters, among neighbors and acquaintances who illustrated the proverb that a prophet is not without honor save in his own country or among his own people. His own mother failed to detect what pious worshippers of a later age beheld streaming from him at every point, an energy, a goodness, a wisdom, a love that marked him as unique among the children of men.

After reaching maturity he abandoned his father's trade and took up the profession of a peripatetic teacher. The hope of Israel, the desire of the ages, the whole moral desolation and the political distraction of the times became to him a call to proclaim the good news of God's nearness to his countrymen. John the Baptist had helped to shape events. Never man spake like Jesus, and the bonafide cures wrought upon the bodies and the souls of the

expectant multitudes only deepened the general impression that a loving God was about to visit His people. This was the gospel as proclaimed to an ever widening circle of sympathizers. And the power which was, for him, renewed in the long hours of communion with God whom he knew to be his father, went out to many who hailed him as the promised one, whose coming the prophets had foretold.

Under the pressure of the inevitable opposition on the part, especially, of the pharisees, the guardians of Israel's orthodoxy, the teaching of Jesus assumed a decidedly apocalyptic character. Dark hints foreshadowed the impending national catastrophe. Did Jesus care to assume the crown of Messiah? We know, at least, that the politico-social program of the nation was utterly distasteful to him. He preferred to develop the conception of a spiritual kingdom in which the ties of the most intimate kinship were to mean less than the fatherhood of God. No doubt his trying experiences in his own home had helped to give prominence to this idea. Disappointment followed upon the heel of expectation. His own people consider him insane; Nazareth repudiates him; the official representatives of the pure religion take courage.

A vile conspiracy cuts off a public ministry of one and one-half to two years' duration,

practically all of which was confined to a small section of his native land. Israel remains true to her traditions of killing her heaven-sent messengers. Gethsemane shows the agonizing soul of the disappointed, yet resigned Master, who was intent on obeying the Father's will. Nobody, be it friend or foe, could possibly have invented a description of such an agony, ending with its "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" The gloom of Calvary has settled upon the final scene of the Son of Man. It is perfectly feasible to suppose that Jesus had foreseen the outcome, and the resultant reflexions supplied the germ for that luxuriant growth of apocalyptic speculations which fill so large a part of the gospel narratives.

All that remains to be mentioned is a few recollections of scattered teachings, pieced together without much reference to their chronological order, some opalescent traditions of this wonderful personality who had spoken strangely beautiful words and had done the works of a prophet.

This is what history knows of Jesus. We shall have to show, directly, that the science of history does not exhaust the meaning of that life, that it may even have missed what is in reality the main thing about it. A religion that is content to find its main props in definite

historical events ("if so and so did not happen, then your faith is in vain") may satisfy the intellectual demands of the thinker, but it can hardly be said to satisfy that craving for reality, called the hunger for God, which has ever esteemed one deep personal experience worth a century of events ever so well documented. Besides, there is a great multitude of witnesses to show that their faith is *not* in vain—if results count—though they refuse to commit themselves to the events in question.

How fragmentary this record is becomes obvious when the long account of the last week is allowed to appear in the proper perspective, when the speeches, parables, and discussions are put into a class by themselves, when the passages that deal with other characters—pharisees, priests, sadducees, John the Baptist, Peter, John, Judas and all the rest—are put to one side, and when the legendary element is reduced to its lowest terms, the original kernel of truth. It is a sobering fact that nothing which may by any courtesy be called a biography can possibly be reconstructed from such material. Though it is a palpable exaggeration to say that we are certain only of what Jesus did not say and did not do, yet the records, even when studied through the microscope that seems to enlarge the all but invisible details of the gospel, are a sore disappointment to every reader who

is looking for more than shattered and scattered bits. The precious vase is gone, the sherds remain.

THE SUPPLEMENT TO HISTORY

But this is not all. There is a compensation for this irreparable loss. The authentic history of those short years is supplemented by the witness about Jesus. The larger part of the New Testament is a witness to his influence; but for his work it would never have been written. The Christian experience, the soulful testimony of the loyal disciples, the vital evidences presented by what became, in course of time, the Christian church: all this modifies, enormously, our judgment of what is, on its positive side, so scanty a result.

Carlyle once said that it is impossible to build a house without truth—how then a world-religion? The experiences of the disciples after the terrible days of the passion brought out what was latent all along: *this was indeed the Son of God*. The truth could not be burked by the enemy, it could not be obscured by friends. And so the cross, the very weapon that had given all messianic pretensions, not to say divine pretensions (we are speaking after the manner of man) the coup-de-grace, was metamorphosed into the dazzling emblem of victory. What was once an unqualified offense became an

irresistible argument. The ensuing quarrels of contending parties, each claiming to be the truest representative of the new religion, are wearying enough, the world is sick of theories about the "persons" in the Godhead, the social gospel of today has crowded out almost all interest in such speculations, but they all show—even the wellnigh blasphemous definitions of the early symbols—that there was something about Jesus which the eye-witnesses had failed to see and the ear-witnesses had failed to hear. And the history of 1900 years is proof that the grave where Joseph of Arimathea had laid the dead body was not the last word of the life of Jesus.

The early strange traditions about the resurrection of the crucified body and about an impending parousia show how deeply the first converts felt the necessity of accounting for the new life. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit is a concrete expression of this need. The influence of the dead, yet living Lord had to be explained. The disciples, it is well to remember, were a practical society of believers, not a republic of letters. They had no special program to follow, no preconceived scheme, least of all the one of palming off a fraud upon posterity, no philosophy of any description; but they had a thousand facts of daily experiences, absolutely new in their manifestation, to be accounted for in some way.

So the christophanies, the christologies, and the complete machinery of a Jesus-cult gradually got into motion. They all expressed at least one conviction, which had grown out of their experiences, and was based upon the reliable observation of many: He is risen. Many could say with Paul "I live, yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me." Paul's entire theology is an amplification of this spiritual experience. The historical Jesus, as time passes on and the memory becomes dimmed and unreliable, fades away in the brighter light of the new Christ, not known after the flesh. Without Jesus, Christ would have been impossible; as Christ, Jesus became the center of the church's interest; Jesus, the Christ, henceforth was the Lord, as they confessed.

It only remained for the prologs of Matthew and Luke to supply a setting for this supernatural picture, and for John to speculate on pre-existence, and the deification, which Paul had always evaded, was complete. Exit for almost one thousand nine hundred years all interest in the Man of Nazareth. No wonder there are uncertainties about his mission and his message!

We may, in this place, most conveniently mention two points concerning the message of Jesus as it affected the apostolic tradition.

One of the storm-centers at present is found

in the question whether Jesus ever encouraged the idea that he was the promised one, the long-expected Messiah. It is impossible to close this debate for good as long as the question of the evidential value of the eschatological chapters especially in Matthew and in Luke remains unsettled. The question raises no difficulties for him who considers the gospels all of one piece. Of course, Jesus claimed to be the Messiah—and straightway the whole battery of the discredited proof-text method is wheeled into position to defend the point.

We have to reckon with the possibility, however, that these passages are the effect and not the cause of the messianic expectations of the first generation after Christ. It is in reality a question of probabilities. And the appearances are rather in favor of the supposition that, to some extent, the Lord shared these convictions. The evidence is an indirect one; it is found in the whole tenor of apostolic Christianity. While here and there we find it impossible to resist the reasons for rejecting certain statements as authentic, yet the whole spirit of the apostolic age, the attitude of expectation on the part of Paul and the other Christians indicates that some of the Master's words pointed that way. At any rate, Jesus' authority would best explain the unanimous opinion that he was the Messiah. The sayings about the impending

world-catastrophe, the coming of the Son of Man in the clouds of the sky, the suddenness and the nearness of this event are all the more certainly an echo of his own words because they were never really fulfilled. This is but the application of the well-known canon in criticism that of two readings the more difficult one should be followed. Certainly no disciple would have ventured to put such unfulfillable words into the mouth of the Master. This argument will probably be decisive with most students of the debatable question.

The second point, to be considered a little more at length, has to deal with the relation of the original gospel to the theology of the first disciples, notably of Paul.

The situation is perhaps most rapidly characterized when one states what the church added to that simple gospel. Paul's interests converge on the questions about the atonement, reconciliation, justification. These interests are conspicuously absent in the recorded words of Jesus. Paul, not Jesus, is the creator of the language of theology.

This language was shaped and adopted to explain, as far as possible, the mystery of the cross. The cross is no part of the gospel that Jesus preached. It did not enter into his plans about the reconstruction of the kingdom, of the world, along quasi-messianic lines. It was a

reluctant afterthought, if that, forced upon him by the bitter opposition of the Jewish hierarchy. Gethsemane proves that to the last he expected relief; he hoped that the bitter cup might pass. What he looked for did not happen—it is only heroic souls that do not break down in such circumstances. He had faith enough in God, his father, to trust that somehow the cause he represented would still be successful. If he had lived he would, like Paul, have adjusted himself to the changing conditions.

His followers gradually gave up their hopes concerning a visible theocracy; chiliasm became a heresy in the churches. But the eternal hope about the kingdom of God on earth—which was the ideal of Jesus—could not be throttled. The daily prayer of the Christian with its “Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven” is the expression of that hope.

That prayer is the best bequest the Lord left his followers. It has nothing to do with theology. Christian theology did not begin until the necessity arose to account for the new religion. By that time the original freshness of the impression the Master had made was gone. *Hinc illae lacrymae.*

So the questions arose, to be asked by devout men in all succeeding ages and especially today when the true difference between the Christian religion and the religion of the Christ

emerges into the consciousness of so many. These questions have been set in every scale of human emotion, from the dull and melancholy plaint of despair to the shrill challenge of a cocksure skepticism. And the answers have been as various as man with his hopes, his prejudices, his hatreds, his ignorance, his ideals, his religion: Are we still Christian? Is it possible for the modern man to be Christian? Can a life be lived, today, according to the original gospel? Who is going to settle the foul debate in the churches as to who best represents the true spirit of Jesus? How best can we force our way through to the original message without doing injustice to the later generations of men who also tried to reproduce and justify the truth of our religion? Has there ever been, is there ever going to be a satisfactory explanation of that unique life? Is it not true, in a way, that the cause of Jesus perished when he died?

It is deplorable that these questions have so often been associated with the inclination to belittle the apostle Paul, whose theology represents the first decided break with the simplicity of the gospel as preached by Jesus. The antithesis Jesus—Paul has well-nigh been worked to death. Who founded the church, Jesus or Paul? Who has the credit of first seeing the world-wide possibilities of this new gospel: the Master or the disciple? What is the religion of the historic church: Christianity or Paulin-

ism? Thus the contrasts multiply. A formidable literature, claiming the credit of having rescued the real Jesus, has elevated these contrasts into a veritable challenge to the age.

For this awakened interest in the life of Jesus has, in too many cases, implied a competition between a dry-as-dust, clap-board, factitious theology, and a hearty, nervous, human religion, in which Paul has been forced to play a truly pitiful part. The "Back to Christ" people, though well-meaning, have often presented themselves in the rather ungracious light of a man who has climbed a high prominence by means of a convenient ladder and then kicks the ladder away as a useless encumbrance. The scaffolding is not the building; but the building could never have been reared without it. It was through Paul that they were led to Jesus, and now Paul is an obstruction; "he is not the Christ"—which he never pretended to be! So they repeat the slander and indorse the foolish onslaught of Swinburne:

“Though death seem life, and night
Bid rear call darkness light,
Time, faith, and hope keep trust through sorrow and
shame,
Till Christ, by Paul cast out,
Return, and all the rout
Of raging slaves whose prayer defiles his name
Rush headlong to the deep, and die,
And leave no sign to say that faith once heard them
lie.”

The fact is, that the nearer we get to Jesus the more evident it becomes that it was Paul who had best caught his spirit; he was truer to it than the pillar-apostles, who opposed him, for a season.

Paul was anything but a recluse, grinding out theories about man's first disobedience and the fruit of that forbidden tree. He was the most practical man in the apostolic age. His heart beat warm with sympathy for the new converts in many towns. In the most abstruse arguments about God and sin he will stop and give kindly advice about the homeliest affairs of human life. Nothing human seemed alien to this much-travelled, many-sided man. The 12th chapter of his letter to the Romans shows that he knew how to speak the language of the man in the street—a language of simple terms about the elemental things of life. No man—not even John!—ever spoke more sweetly of love (1 Cor. 13) or more manly of freedom, or more prophetically of duty. Modesty was as characteristic of him as it is of every truly great man.

And with all that his understanding of the central truths of Christianity was simply uncanny. No man since has in the remotest degree approximated, for cogency and downright force, his exposition of the Christian faith. Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Edwards drew their strength from him.

And yet he would be only a slave of Jesus Christ. "He must increase, but I must decrease." As a slave he would carry the vase he had fashioned for the service of mankind. "An earthen vessel," he would have called it, though the artificer had shown marvelous skill in making it convenient for handling and beautiful to look upon. Into the creation of the vase he had put his whole soul and it was, in truth, such a masterpiece that in the end the world forgot to ask what was its one purpose, its reason for being. He had formed it to carry water, slave that he was, to parching souls. The water was the main, the indispensable thing, and that had been supplied by his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Many a meaner vessel has been filled from this wonderful vase; men have come again and again, and its contents are not exhausted yet, for it is the water of life that brings refreshing to the nations. Paul had got it at the very spring; he knew it to be the one thing needed: "I make known to you, brethren, as touching the gospel which was preached by me that it is not after man. For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ." To serve him was his chosen life-work, not to please men with theological finesse or agreeable doctrine, least of all to supplant him, the latchet of whose sandals he, too,

would have considered himself unworthy to loose.

It was not his fault when later generations forgot the water for the vase—the religion for the theology.

THE RELIGION OF JESUS

It is generally held that every serious departure from the teachings of Jesus concerning God involves a corresponding corruption of Christianity. If this is true—and in a sense it is true—of the teachings, it must surely also be true of his practises. The church has set herself an ideal, and that ideal happens to be embodied in the person of Jesus. To follow him is still considered, by most Christians, the surest way of reaching humanity's goal.

If this is so there can be no task more important than to find out, if that is at all possible, what was his essential faith. What he believed about God, and how he felt towards God: this ought to be determinative of Christian belief and Christian practise. We have our own lives to live, and our own ideals to construct, but for this life-business none can equip us better than the One who has given his name to modern civilization.

What he thought about evil, death, immortality, heaven, character, does not come within the limits of this discussion; nor need we be detained here by any detailed examination of his

attitude towards the duties one man owes another—the particularly modern expression of all true religion. If these subjects are touched upon at all it is only with reference to their bearings on the central subject of his relation to God.

As for what Jesus thought about the one hundred and one interests which distinguish the first century from the twentieth, Christianity has been forced to the practical admission that that is of comparatively little importance to us. Whatever is temporal, local, accidental in life is unworthy to assume the importance of first principles. To elevate chance remarks addressed to certain individuals in special circumstances into rules of conduct universally and eternally valid is the surest way of turning the sweetly natural life of Jesus into a grotesque caricature. This policy is the mother of most of the abortive attempts to translate Jesus into the twentieth century and Palestine into America or England or Germany. He is the Savior of men not because he compels assent in every field of human endeavor, but because he is the acknowledged master of their souls. This consideration will, likewise, mitigate somewhat the disappointment when it is seen how many interests, vital to our modern existence in which, for better or for worse, we must fight it out, are ignored, absolutely, in his message to man.

As regards those elements which for textual or historical reasons appear in the least questionable, we are in duty bound to eliminate them altogether when the attempt is made to reduce his religion to its simplest terms. For instance, it would be indefensible to draw upon his eschatological sayings that are so thoroughly saturated with ideas drawn from Jewish apocalypses. Again, the avowed purpose and method of John warns the student that its contributions are unavailable, however useful they may be in other directions. Christ was not the center of Jesus' religion. A similar caveat is in order with reference to some portions of the synoptics. Once again, the parabolic sections of the gospels, embodying perhaps the most genuine teaching of Jesus, (it will be recalled that John does not transmit a single one) will have to be used *as parables*. Luckily the time is about past when, in the not over-elegant but expressive phrase, they were made to go on all fours. And yet, once more, at every step one is under the obligation of considering how much the whole world-conception of antiquity was bound to mold the thoughts of Jesus. We do not believe that this has ever been done thoroughly. The ancient and the modern not only differ, they differ violently, without a single chance of a compromise, in their views about earth, heaven, hell, God, man, matter, spirit,

energy, space, creation, law. Science unequivocally contradicts the antique guesses at these matters. And Jesus stood under the spell of this world-conception. Who will say that Jesus meant the same thing that occurs to a modern astronomer, devout and not mad, when he spoke of Our Father who is in heaven?

When the ground is thus cleared it will be seen that the religion of Jesus was extremely simple—as all true religion is bound to be, for it is the one aboriginal trait of humanity. A man's religion is given with his relations to God. That relation is the primitive thing about the universe.

To Jesus, God is everything, and communion with him is the very life of the soul. This determines his whole religious faith. Even his ethics is cast in religious terms. To do good and to abstain from evil simply because goodness is right and evil is wrong is an alien thought which has to be smuggled into the New Testament before it can be read as a text-book on morals. This may be said about character. Jesus believed that character, actions, life, not beliefs, constituted the important thing about religion. Those shall be blest who are humble and meek and righteous and merciful and peaceable and pure in heart. But even so, character is just a means of reaching God. All life is to be lived with reference to the God who gave it

and who watches over it. "Hate father and mother," he could say with a magnificent exaggeration and an apparent disregard for the human affections, so God be but followed. God will recompense him who loses all—father, mother, brother, sister, goods, even life (or soul: note that in Jesus' mother-tongue there was no difference between soul and life.)

This God is in some ways inscrutable (He alone knows about the end of things); nobody can be like Him in absolute goodness ("Why callest thou me good? Nobody is good but God"—Matthew's version being a palpable softening of the real words); He has the power to destroy and to cast in gehenna; He is the supreme Lord, the one master to be served. The first commandment is: The Lord our God, the Lord is one, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. (Mark 12, 29f.) He is the final arbiter of our lot: "to sit on my right hand or on my left hand is not mine to give, but it is for them for whom it hath been prepared of my Father." (Mat. 20, 23).

It is notable how dominant the idea was that man should do God's will. This may be called his favorite way of describing true piety. Who was the Master's nearest kin? He that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Who

should get into the palace of the great king? Not every one that saith Lord, Lord, but he that doeth the will of my father in heaven.

Into what a wilderness of contradictions, dense and wild and gloomy, has man strayed in the matter of worshipping God! God was, and God could hear, and life was full of misery and disillusion and enemies. Man has ever believed that through prayer this God could be influenced to change affairs to suit man's needs and desires, from the totemist to the theist, from Elijah to Moody, from Paul to Luther. And into the darkness of dense superstition and impious arrogance and pious half-knowledge and childlike uncertainty Jesus throws a ray with the power of a searchlight: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

Dare a thirsty nation pray for rain, a frantic mother for the life of her only babe? No doubt; they always have and always will. But what about the answers to such prayers? They do not supply material to be used as proofs of the value of prayer. *God's will will be done somehow.* Here Jesus spoke in plain terms; this was his deepest conviction; and the nemesis of doubt and unfaith has caught vast multitudes simply because they did not care to take him at his word. He did not deprecate petition in prayer as such, he used it himself; but when the iron went into his soul and the

flesh rebelled against the injustice of men, when the cup was found to hold not a draught from paradise but the verjuice of sad disappointment, in his extremity he could say, "Nevertheless, not my, but Thy will be done." This scene, which no friend would ever have invented and no foe could ever have invented, gives character to the faith of Jesus better than all the isolated remarks which the loyalty of men has arranged into "sermons" about the kingdom of God.

This God of Jesus, whose will would be done, could forgive sin; His providence embraces all things from the dying sparrow and the wilting lily to the comfort of His loved children; into the hands of this God he could commit his spirit in peace.

To extend the kingdom of this his God was the Master's business. As a servant he was willing to do this work, ministering unto the needs of others, one of many servants, beginning the work which, as he felt, later generations were to engage in with even greater success. What mattered all the rabbinic discussions about the right interpretation of the law, the incursions of the Roman empire into the precincts of a holy land, and the general malaise of the people? The kingdom was the thing! To establish it God had sent him into the world. Now it was at hand. And procla-

mation was to be made that its king was a God of love, a Father, for short.

Jesus felt that the service of this Father must be something better and more ennobling than a formal religion of rites and sacrifices; that His laws must be spiritually interpreted; that faith in such a God helps to overcome difficulties even to the healing of body and soul; that in prayer one could come near unto Him; that love for Him was the fulfillment of all demands upon humanity; that the brotherhood of all was the practical expression of that love; and that to proclaim these old truths with a new emphasis and to realize them, as had never been done before, in his own life, was why he had come into this world.

Every man has a mission; his life carries a message. This was Jesus' mission; this was his message; it centered in God, the Father.

Repeatedly the question has been asked: Now that our changed world-conception had forced us to change our views concerning the nature of God, dare we say that Jesus was right about this his message?

Many a time the right of Jesus to speak so authoritatively about God has been challenged—oftenest by noisy infidels, sometimes by burdened, godseeking souls. For religion is a one-to-one relation, impatient of interruptions and external authorities. Strange as it may seem,

especially in view of the terrible history of religious despotisms over the souls of millions, man is still ever ready to test the validity of the received faith, and when he does that authorities do not count. Here is the one sphere where he will be his own master. In any science he is willing to defer to the opinion of the man who knows, who has mastered the subject; no intelligent person would consent to express an opinion on the properties of radium before having mastered all its discoverers have had to say about it. Medicine has its high-priests, and the law a sanctity which is truly awe-inspiring to one unacquainted with the ways of the courts. But when God is the subject for discussion every novice deems himself as wise as Calvin or Spinoza. The theologian is on the defensive. Every man will be his own high-priest, and nothing is sacred but by the consent of the devotee.

We believe that Jesus, when he spoke of God, his Father, was wrong no more than the modern man is wrong when he speaks of God in terms of cosmic forces and ethical values and intellectual judgments. Forces and values and judgments do not exist *in vacuo*, but always presuppose something behind them. So with the terms used by Jesus.

All terms applied to God are figures of speech; there is no exception. The statement

that God is a father, a king, a spirit, a person, only adumbrates the truth. It does not clearly define or exhaust the truth. Language made by man halts in the presence of God. God is a father, and He is much more. God is spirit, and He is much more. God is a person and He is much more. He is very love. And what is Love? We know what it is, but we do not define it in words.

No—modern science will not convict Jesus of error when he speaks of God any more than the Bible will convict philosophy of error when it speaks of God. Jesus and Kant and Micah and Browning all speak of the same God—there is only one—who is over all, blessed forever. Amen.

It is only because Jesus is eternally and supremely right about God that a rejection of him means, for all whom he forced and forces to face the one great issue, a rejection of God. It was only so far as he bore the message of God that he demanded and demands allegiance. The dignity and the authority of kingship is vested in the ambassador only because and in so far as he represents the king. That one should accept him for his own sake was no part of his program as a savior. He came as a servant. His God, who is our God, was the Lord.

Time came when this simple truth seemed

inadequate to his followers. The primal, cosmic has always been too big for man and so he has had recourse to definitions and dilutions and special applications. Soon the battle began to rage about words that might signify many things, yea, that to the human understanding might signify nothing! We are not yet agreed what is meant by incarnation, miracles, propitiation, Holy Spirit, resurrection, immortality, and a hundred other words that hint at facts. The time even came when men thought they could do service to God by extirpating any goodness in the world that was not allied with the official body of belief. Pagan virtues were but shining vices, and exemplary holiness in men might, so John Rogers taught, be nothing but "a cloak to hide their gross and absurd doctrine." Heresy trials, as the church has at last grudgingly admitted, are held to determine not whether any objectionable statements are in accordance with the truth—when did heresy trials ever tend or purpose to establish truth?—but whether they are in accordance with a certain body of pronouncements, a creed, accepted by a certain body of men, the clergy, as the official belief of a body of worshippers, the church.

That religion, the communion of the soul with its God, could not be crushed by this monstrous weight of words is due simply to

the fact that religion cannot be crushed by anything. We are smitten with a hunger for God and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Him.

“LORD, TEACH US HOW TO PRAY.”

We have seen how the practise grew which made Jesus the object of religious adoration. We have tried to trace, in barest outline, the religion of Jesus himself. It is almost nugatory to inquire whether he encouraged this practise, or whether his religion is any justification of this practise.

But at the risk of repetition we shall ask, more specifically, What did he teach about prayer? This will help us to decide whether the church did well in addressing songs to Jesus, *quasi deo*.

What can be said about the memory of Jesus is especially applicable to his prayer-life; it will always provide an effective counterweight to hold down the too exuberant imagination that delights in enlarging upon uncertain matters. If it had not been for this memory of the veritable man who grew, worked, suffered, and died—though it is noticeable how pale it eventually got—there is no telling to what lengths the church would have gone in its speculations about the “natures” of Christ. The fantastic mythologies of other religions are an indica-

tion of what is produced by the human mind when allowed to deviate unchecked from the sober facts of life. The full flower of this tendency, so far as it was allowed to develop, may be sought in the various "gospels" of James, Thomas, Pseudo-Matthew, Nicodemus, with the corresponding "Acts" and Apocalypses of later legend-making centuries.

But there was always the authentic record that brought men back to earth. The fathers might theologize, a Plato might speculate, and our modern utopians play with pictures, in the end men had to echo the confession of Faust:

"I have, alas! Philosophy,
Medicine, Jurisprudence too,
And to my cost Theology,
With ardent labor, studied through,
And here I stand, with all my lore,
Poor fool, no wiser than before."

If Jesus had never lived the world would probably have beheld today a very high form of religion—this is a matter of course with every one who is committed to the principle of a growth upwards, a progress in the process of the ages—but it would not have been the Christian religion. *The Christian religion is conditioned by the appearance and the character of the historical person of Jesus Christ.*

It is certain that Jesus prayed. A dutiful son of Israel, he observed the stated hours of

worship and followed the forms prescribed. While he did not hesitate to abrogate—abrogate is the word, and not just fulfil or spiritualize—any letter that had outlived its usefulness, yet his whole spiritual being must have been determined by the religious life of his time and people. The prayers he was taught in childhood must have made a lasting impression on the boy. He had learned that prayer was a duty. He had learned that it was not to be interrupted to salute even a king or to uncoil a serpent that had wound itself around the foot of the worshipper. (Mishnah, Berakhoth 30.)

How did he pray? The New Testament gives us as good as no information that is of much help in deciding this matter. He could not have prayed the "Lord's prayer," which was given as a model to be followed by his disciples; his prayer-life is shrouded in mystery. When he prayed he retired into solitude, and he deprecated the sensational, spectacular standing in public places affected by the pharisees.

And yet we are able to help ourselves. It is certain that Jesus attended the services of the Jewish synagog; it is highly probable that he occasionally acted as the Sheliach Tsibbur, reading the section for the Sabbath and leading the devotions of the service. The third

gospel contains a record of such a synagog service in his home-town Nazareth. This service began, according to ancient custom, with two prayers.

Here, then, we have some real prayers of Jesus. It will be interesting to note them. (vid. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Book III, chapter 10.)

The first prayer was:—

“Blessed be Thou, O Lord, King of the world, Who formest the light and createst the darkness, Who makest peace, and createst everything; Who, in mercy, givest light to the earth, and to those who dwell upon it, and in Thy goodness, day by day, and every day, renewest the works of creation. Blessed be the Lord our God for the glory of His handiworks, and for the light-giving lights which He has made for His praise. Selah. Blessed be the Lord our God, Who has formed the lights.”

And the second:—

“With great love hast Thou loved us, O Lord our God, and with much overflowing pity hast Thou pitied us, our Father and our King. For the sake of our fathers who trusted in Thee, and Thou taughtest them the statutes of life, have mercy upon us, and teach us. Enlighten our eyes in Thy Law; cause our hearts to cleave to Thy commandments; unite our hearts to love and fear Thy name, and we

shall not be put to shame, world without end. For Thou art a God Who preparest salvation, and us hast Thou chosen from among all nations and tongues, and hast in truth brought us near to Thy great Name—Selah—that we may lovingly praise Thee and Thy Unity. Blessed be the Lord, Who in love chose His people Israel.”

After these invocations, as we would now call them, came the recital of the Schema—the Jewish creed—and this was followed by the real prayers or “Benedictions.” There were nineteen of these, six of which—the most ancient ones—were generally recited on the Sabbath, together with more informal, extemporaneous ones, specimens of which are given in the Talmud. Jesus, no doubt, used these Benedictions. We give the first and the eighteenth, which were recited with bent body:—

I. “Blessed be the Lord our God, and the God of our fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; the Great, the Mighty, and the Terrible God, the Most High God, Who showeth mercy and kindness. Who createth all things, Who remembereth the gracious promises to the fathers, and bringeth a Savior to their children’s children, for His own Name’s sake, in love. O King, Helper, Savior, and Shield! Blessed art Thou, O Jehovah, the Shield of Abraham.”

XVIII. "We give praise to Thee, because Thou art He, Jehovah, our God, and the God of our fathers, for ever and ever. The Rock of our life, the Shield of our salvation, Thou art He, from generation to generation. We laud Thee, and declare Thy praise. For our lives which are bound up in Thy Hand, for our souls which are committed to Thee, and for Thy wonders which are with us every day and for Thy marvelous deeds and Thy goodnesses which are at all seasons, evening, and morning, and midday—Thou Gracious One, for Thy compassions never end, Thou Pitying One, for Thy mercies never cease, forever do we put our trust in Thee. And for all this, blessed and exalted be Thy Name, our King, always, world without end. And all the living bless Thee—Selah—and praise Thy name in truth, O God, our Salvation and our Help. Selah. Blessed art Thou, Jehovah. The Gracious One is Thy Name, and to Thee it is pleasant to give praise."

The Book of Psalms, with which the Lord was familiar, will supply additional material. Gethsemane and Golgotha contribute the personal element. It is psychologically impossible that those scenes should have been invented by friend or foe.

Jesus prayed to God, his Father, and he expected his disciples to pray to God, their Father. Neither the practise of the Master

nor his recorded teachings give the least justification to the Jesus-worship which grew up so fast after his death. When Origen said: "All prayer must be offered to the Father," he had behind him the positive instructions of Jesus, for he taught his followers, if he taught them anything at all about prayer, that they should pray to "Our Father who art in heaven." The normative form, when the doctrine of the Trinity becomes thoroughly articulated, is prayer in the Spirit, through the Son, *to the Father*.

Even so good a Catholic as Loisy—it is well known how in spite of all modernist sympathies and papal edicts, Loisy insists on being at heart a true Son of the Catholic church—can say in *L'Evangile et l'Eglise*, written to prove that all we find in the church today is only the development of the original germinal truth, that the worship of Christ and the worship of Saints did not belong to the gospel of Jesus. The two are yoked together. This worship, to be sure, expresses some eternal principle. To secure the Catholic dogma of a historical continuity something must be found out of which this cult grew; to be catholic it must have been believed *semper, ubique et ab omnibus*. The eternal truth that divinity could be mirrored in humanity found a new and most fruitful expression. Perpetuate this expression and you have the

Jesus cult. According to Loisy you have even more. You have the cult of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and the promiscuous cult of the saints. All this *had* to come. Thus wisdom is justified of her children and the history of the church, which means catholicism, supplies both the *esse* and the *posse* of a rational and orthodox Christianity. (Vid. *Christliche Welt* 15, 1909.) Whether the explanation will be acceptable will depend upon one's idea of the church; the important thing is that the church soon felt herself called upon and competent to make the extension.

We believe that Jesus never in the least justified or encouraged the practise. Nevertheless, the Christians of the first century, and of all following centuries, felt little compunction about this innovation; they probably thought, if they thought of it at all, that they were acting in his spirit.

It was easy for the first Christians to do so. And in a time when an Antiochus Epiphanes and a Seleucus were supposed to be the offspring of God and emperors of various degrees were supposed to share the dignity and honor of divinity itself, they could without difficulty take the final step which Paul always hesitated to take, and call Jesus God outright. Under the stress of such widespread influences the virgin-birth stories and the genealogies going

back, as in Luke, to God Himself, took their start.

The Graeco-Roman world had accepted Alexander as a son of Zeus and Olympias, Augustus as a son of Jupiter and Attia, Plato as a son of Apollo and Periktione. Detailed stories of a supernatural origin and nature were told of Rameses II., Sargon, Eakus, Delphos, Minos; Hercules, Esculapius, Scipio Africanus, Simon Magus, and a host of other gods, and kings, and great men. Without going to the length of claiming that these stories are of a piece with the sublime story of Jesus Christ one may still say, unhesitatingly, that these common and all but universal traditions throw a flood of light on the New Testament efforts in an analogous field. To ignore it altogether is to put the life of Jesus into a false light.

It is not possible to trace the story of the application of such ideas to the Man of Nazareth, the Savior of men. To what lengths well intentioned people will go can be seen in the "Ancient Prayer" abomination that is bedeviling literally millions today. This religious tit-bit, because of its utter fatuity really deserves to be buried in silence. But we shall append the document simply as a sample of what some worshippers in the twentieth century can fabricate and endorse and pass along, now that we had thought the shackles of superstition had

dropped from a tortured humanity. It will tend to make us modest when we feel inclined to condemn the name-worshippers and fetish-worshippers of other times and climes. It is painfully evident that vast numbers of Christians are today supremely indifferent to the work done by the biblical scholar and the historian. This "ancient prayer" letter is circulating in different forms. One is the following:—

"'Oh, Lord Jesus, I implore Thee to bless all mankind! Keep us from all evil by Thy precious blood; and take us to dwell with Thee in eternity.' This was sent me by a friend. Copy it and see what will happen. It is said that those who will not write this prayer will meet with some great misfortune; those who will write it nine times will receive some great joy on the ninth day. It was said in Jerusalem that he who would write this prayer will be delivered from all evil and calamity. Do not break this chain. Make a wish while writing this, and do not fail to write it nine times and send it to nine friends."—

Fortunately there is a respectable number of recipients who are willing to risk the danger of breaking the chain, otherwise those letters would multiply like gnats in the summer-time. But it is a melancholy thought which is prompted by such a caricature of prayer. How far has Christianity, in many of its adherents,

travelled from the simple religion of Jesus Christ! All the way from the prayer in the spirit and truth to the fetishism that adores the true cross and the precious blood, that seeks special blessings in "making a wish" over letters concocted of childishness, falsehood, and purest *Aberglaube*. A timely pendent is supplied by those whose finest enthusiasm for Christian work expresses itself in the desire just to get into heaven and to look on the Lord's face. That is the highest ambition, and glory enough for man! It is enough to make angels weep.

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN PRAYER?

How a man prays will depend upon what kind of a man he is. What he is, what his nature craves, and what his ideal is, will be expressed nowhere so well as in his prayers.

All service ranks the same with God, we are told; and it is probably true that a prayer is a prayer though there's nothing in it—but the desire to pray. To be sure, there is a vast difference between "battering the gates of heaven with storms of prayer," whether indulged in by the giants of the religious world or by a despairing castaway, and the calm intercourse between soul and soul that alone reaches the heights of spiritual adoration and aspiration; but the essential character of prayer as communion with God is thereby not affected.

The literature on prayer has grown to such

proportions that it is sheer interminable. Although the supposedly materialistic, if not atheistic, spirit of the age has forced many a man to confess, with Romanes, "I have not prayed for a quarter of a century," there is no abatement either in praying or in writing about prayer. The soul, which is "incurably religious," cannot help it. Man does not need to try to pray; he will pray in spite of himself and in the starkest opposition to his closet philosophy. One day he may prove all prayer absurd and contrary to the fixed order of the universe, and the next may see him on his knees, muttering the publican's petition. For we are all human. We need God, and man cannot even swear without praying: every malediction is a concession to the religious claims of humanity.

And since the claims and the needs are various prayer will take on endless forms. "To one, prayer is chiefly emotional fellowship; to another, it is more largely self-devotion to God-like moral ideals; to a third, it expresses the impulse to action; to a fourth, it is reverent reflectiveness in the presence of the deepest truths of life and destiny." (Coe, *The Religion of a Mature Mind*, p. 356.) It is the variable and always varying expression of the soul's vitality.

There is no standard. It is compatible with

the most extravagant views of God and of the soul. A praying man will do anything, so he but express himself. He will use the language of childish superstition which debases the noblest end of devotion. He will bully the universe on the assumption that his prayer, if only fervent enough, will be omnipotent. He will instruct God in the niceties of some recondite and palsied theology. He will challenge the Power that is over all to do its worst or its best for foe or friend. He will sing *Te Deums* in the midst of the mutilated bodies of thousands of slaughtered innocents. He will grovel in the dust a crushed sinner or hurl back upon God the imputation that mankind is to be blamed for its misdeeds, and that He had better man's forgiveness give—or take! He will drive bargains with Heaven. He will expect the repetition of a set form of words to act like a charm, and to take the place of wisdom, foresight, thrift, and work. He will remind the Never-forgetting One of His promises, and importune a reluctant Judge, and anticipate the normal workings of His world.

Or he will come to get renewed courage and hope and strength to fight life's battle like a man. He will remind himself of the beneficence of God's laws. He will speak his thoughts, not as though God needed to be told, but because the telling brings relief and clears the

way for wise action. He will use the language of childlike faith which a loving Father knows how to interpret, and to heed, and to correct, and to discount, if need be. He will praise God from whom all mercies flow and thank the Lord for He is good, for His lovingkindness endureth forever. He will make God a confident in all his plans, trusting that wisdom may come to him in the quiet hours of self-devotion and meditation, and at the last fall asleep a'babbling o' green fields and still waters where the shepherd of souls has led his beloved.

Wherever man aspires or hopes, or loves, or works, or thinks right thoughts he prays, i. e., he establishes a personal relation with the Power greater than himself that makes for justice and law and goodness. Essentially it turns out to be a co-operation with that Power, not a thaumaturgic control over it. This co-operation may go to the extent of practical identification with it. "Communion" and "union" are no farther apart in being than in language. Language is, as it were, but a vehicle for the transfer of spirit. To talk means to transfer, communicate, commit one's self to another being. Whether there come any special favors by way of response—vulgo, answers—is utterly beside the mark.

“No, be man and nothing more—

Man who, as man conceiving, hopes and fears,
And craves and deprecates, and loves and loathes,
And bids God help him, till death touch his eyes,
And show God granted most, denying all.”

In other words, the reason for prayer is found somewhere in the prayer itself, it brings it's own reward; it's value is independent of any more or less satisfactory answers, whose apologetic usefulness is always gauged by the antecedent belief or unbelief of man.

The elements of normal Christian prayer are:

1. that God's will be done; 2. that man cultivate the frame of mind in which he will be glad to assist God in the doing of His will; and 3. that this co-operation bring strength and peace and satisfaction—a sense of real harmony with God's universe. Needless to say, the action of such a prayer is reciprocal: man acts and is acted upon, speaks and is spoken to, thinks and is thought of, by God.

Who or what is this being—God? Prayer is the identification and communion or union with God. How can these definitions satisfy as long as men shall fail to agree on the nature of that being? Here ignorance extends her sable wand, the supreme mistress of the situation. Agreeable to the ancient and inherited custom, it is here that the ferocious battle of words rages most.

As many gods, so many kinds of prayer. To

say that prayer is addressed to God only simply means confusion doubly confounded. There are cases on record of well-intentioned preachers addressing "The Absolute" in prayer! Self-communion—musing—has, with some, all the true marks of prayer. The dead yet living ancestors have a pretty strong claim upon being among the original objects of prayer. The saints are held to pray to God, and many pray to them. Mary, the "Mother of God," and Jesus, the "Son of God," have both their devotees by the million. Idol, pagan and Christian, receive the devotion of man in spite of all rationalisms to the contrary. And nature worship is, as shall be shown farther on, much more than a convenient figure of speech. These various modes of worship are part and parcel of our humanity. It is illusive to suppose that we can slough off the whole coil of our past history, our traditions and habits, our fears and flickering hopes the moment we have invented the intellectual statement as the expression of a reasonable conviction: God is One.

God is One. So be it. But man is not a mere thinking machine, turning out syllogisms. He is swayed by many feelings, the football of many forces. If the worship of many gods be paganism, there is much paganism in Christianity. Polytheism was, in some respects, too good a guess at the nature of the universe to

be thrown out, bag and baggage, as soon as the better explanation occurred to man. Pan is not dead yet, pace all the mournful poets that romanticism has produced.

It was religion that found tongue in all this imperfect and ignorant worship, with its rites, and incantations, and adjurations. The world sorely needed its prophets; it needed Jesus Christ to declare the only true God to whom altars had been reared in all ages and in all countries, wherever there were human hearts and human needs.

PRAYER TO JESUS IN MODERN TIMES—

HYMNOLOGY

The prayer chain that was given on a previous page represents, confessedly, an extreme development of a religious cult in Christendom. It would be unfair to leave the impression that the tendency which started with a martyr's "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" was bound to grow into such a vagary. Extravagances are marked and notable only because they are an exaggeration of a normal type.

We believe that norm to be present in the hymns sung by the church, true to the tradition as recorded by Pliny, in honor of Jesus.

The recorded prayers of individuals, Augustine's, Luther's, Wesley's, Beecher's are the personal expressions of private opinion and feel-

ing, and have only in the smallest degree become public property; and the liturgical prayers prescribed by the rubric of special denominations are the official declaration only of the convictions of their respective communicants.

Naturally there are vast differences. It is one of the many merits of the Book of Common Prayer that its prayers avoid the invertebrate sentimentalism which intimacy with the God of Love has so often engendered. Much of this historic volume has been outgrown, some of its detailed petitions are grotesquely out of place in the mouth of a modern worshipper and can hardly be used without a violent wrench of one's sense of the eternal fitness of things; thus does the progress of the ages make ancient knowledge uncouth. Would a revision elide these objectionable features? Hardly. The Book of Common Prayer is of one piece, the splendid embodiment of a definite historic temper. It is a historic document. Some day a new one may do for coming centuries what it has done for the past. But it will be a portentously difficult task to improve upon its prayers. They do not speak the language of immanence; but for dignity and sobriety, they are wellnigh inimitable. A cursory reading, better still, the habitual use of the various collects will fill one with a devout admiration for the restraint of the writers. We note, in

passing, that it is the rarest exception where these prayers are addressed directly to Jesus. He is generally introduced in the stereotype phrase that concludes most of them: "Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

It is the hymns of Christendom that are the common possession of all churches. They are sung by all people. Thinkingly or mechanically the worshippers have repeated the old phrases until they are, today, an integral part of our religion. Many a person may not be able to recite a single psalm, the phrases of his daily prayer may be threadbare from over much use, but it will go hard to find one whose life has not absorbed several of the old hymns sung by father and mother when childhood was impressionable and the memory fresh and strong.

These hymns are, in an astonishingly large number, prayers directed to the exalted Jesus. What Jesus is to the authors and to the thoughtful singers can be determined by an examination of the epithets applied to Him.

We shall take, by way of illustration, the forty-nine hymns that have special reference to Jesus, as given in a popular hymnal that is used by many churches of a number of denominations. Other hymnals would yield a similar result.

We find the following:— Lord, Guard,

Leader, Christ, Sun of my Soul, Savior dear, Jesus, Son, Master, (dear) Redeemer, David's Holy Son, Dear Shepherd, Incarnate Word, The Lord my Righteousness, Jesus Christ our King and Head, Christ the King of Glory, Lamb, Matchless King, Lord of Love, Lord of Heaven and Earth, Lord of Peace, Prince of Peace, Lord of Years, Potentate of Time, Creator of the Rolling Spheres, Jesus Holy Jesus, Lord of All, My God and King, My gracious Master and my God, Our Holy Lord and King (to thee *alone* we sing), Brother, Friend, Jesus the God of Love, Prince of Glory, Eternal King, King Triumphant, King of Angels, The Incarnate Deity, Jesus our Immanuel, Sun of Righteousness, Son of God, Son of Man, Judge, Man of Sorrows, The Resurrection Thou, Conqueror, etc., etc. This list could be extended *ad libitum*, so as to include thousands of names and descriptive terms. (Cf. Boehmer's study of the subject, *Studier-Stube* 1905.)

A special subdivision contains twenty-nine hymns of "Communion with Christ," and the prayers that follow are practically all addressed to him. Some of the finest and most endearing songs of the church need but be mentioned to show what a hold this practise has on the worshippers. For here we find Bernard de Clairvaux's O Jesus, King most wonderful, Thou Conqueror renowned; Jesus, I love Thy charm-

ing Name, 'Tis music to mine ear; Jesus, the very thought of Thee, With sweetness fills my breast; Wesley's Love Divine, all love excelling; O Holy Savior, Friend unseen; I am Thine, O Lord, I have heard Thy voice; Blessed Savior, Thee I love; Savior, more than life to me, I am clinging, clinging close to Thee; Come, my soul, thy suit prepare, Jesus loves to answer prayer; Pass me not, O gentle Savior, Hear my humble cry; More love to Thee, O Christ.

The first thing that strikes the reader of such lists is the remarkable wealth of descriptive names which piety has coined; the second is the recurrence of those lordly and kingly terms, that emphasize the transcendence of Jesus over man and over all. These hymn-books cultivate a rather robust faith in the majestic power and glory of the Master. They are (let us be grateful for that!) refreshingly free from the sickening sweetishness that makes so many hymns of the pietists offensive to modern taste: Sweet Jesus, Darling Jesus, My Sweet Heart, My Lovely Bridegroom *et id genus omne*. Many a worshipper during the renaissance preferred to donate to his church a St. Sebastian rather than a Peter or a John because St. Sebastian was pictured as a comely, athletic youth, good to look upon; so the post-reformation days often cultivated this ecstatic,

neurotic style, in which the most delicate affairs of private life were allegorized and spiritualized into religion, and the language past muster just because it betokened an intimate relation with the Heart of hearts. What is religion but a perfect abandon, anyway? The melodies of ancient love songs had done service in the churches, tavern doggerel had supplied the text for chants, a Song of Solomon had been twisted into a parable of Christ the Bridegroom and the Church his Bride; then why not draw upon the phraseology of youthful love to depict the sweet experiences of the soul? Wesley invokes "Jesus, Lover of my soul, Let me to Thy bosom fly;" the followers of Zinzendorf went farther, and the only reason many of their songs are not classed with erotic literature is that they are, at the worst, still the vehicle of true religious adoration.

It is mainly, then, as the Lord of all things that Jesus is invoked in our songs. On this idea the changes are rung in every key and mood. Of course, the man in the pew, and, too often, the man in the pulpit too, is perfectly innocent of any attempt to justify this procedure. He sings thus because the church sings thus, and he prays to Jesus because his father did so before his time, and there is an end of the matter.

And many a person who would have liked

to ask questions has found the path blocked with the equation Jesus-God, and for fear of getting entangled in the briars of all the heresies has returned the way whence he had come. There is no use in verbal niceties and philosophical refinements and subtle distinctions when the church has settled it for all times. And so he will sing vociferously, because unthinkingly, "Hark, ten thousand harps and voices sound the note of praise above! Jesus reigns and Heaven rejoices. Jesus reigns, the God of Love. See! He sits on yonder throne! Jesus rules the world alone!"

Our hymn-books are full of such sentiments. Whether "Jesus" is used or "God" will often depend upon the exigencies of the rhyme or the rhythm. The popular taste is not very particular in such matters: all people who are not white are black; stones have one color, to wit, stone-color; one star differeth not from another in glory; a whale is a fish; and the Bible is the word of God.

A passage in the *Journal Intime* of Amiel is not without interest in this connection:—

Every religion proposes an ideal and a model. The Christian ideal is sublime, and its model of a divine beauty. We may hold aloof from the churches, and yet bow ourselves before Jesus. We may be suspicious of the clergy, and refuse to have anything to do with cate-

chisms, and yet love the Holy and the Just, who came to save and not to curse. Jesus will always supply us with the best criticism of Christianity, and when Christianity has passed away the religion of Jesus will in all probability survive. After Jesus as God we shall come back to faith in the God of Jesus.

But to distinguish here and to draw lines is not without danger to the peace of many a mind. Fine discrimination is, in the large matters of religion, a passport to the synthesis of all the heresies. And when all has been said that can be said, there may still be some good reason for this popular choice. Lampe must have his religion, too; and that religion must be practical. It must work; and if it works, it must be true.

And there is no denying that this religion, though it is not and never was the Christianity of Christ, has been helpful to millions. We are all distant relations of poor Lampe, though it may be a bit humiliating to acknowledge the impeachment. In the shadow of the valley of death, at the brink of the grave, on the battle-field, and in the agony of mortal disease men have spoken to Jesus the Sympathizer and have been strengthened for their final struggle. Victory has come to their cause and peace to their souls, and they were convinced that their prayers were heard. There are many ways

of praying, and they may all be genuine. The results prove them to be so.

THE REASONS FOR PRAYER TO JESUS

We proceed to inquire into the reason why so many prefer to address their prayer to Jesus. It is certain that the great majority take their prayers and their hymns ready-made and ask no questions for comfort's sake. These do not concern us. But when a Wesley, or Luther, or Doddridge falls into the habit it cannot be put down to plain carelessness. There must be serious reasons that weigh heavier than any scruples to encroach upon the sovereignty of God. We shall mention four of the more prominent ones.

I. The overpowering feeling of gratitude to Jesus.

That the intense absorption into the sufferings of Jesus, the pious contemplation of the five wounds should seek and find expression in more or less ecstatic utterances addressed to the Man of Sorrows could have been foreseen. The history of monastic Christianity gives many an episode of religious self-hypnosis induced by the prolonged study of Jesus' passion. The classic case is that of St. Francis of Assisi. With him and his congeners abnegation and castigation and mortification become the virtues of religion not only because the flesh needed to be curbed and the world denied and the devil

shunned, but because the divine life of the Lord had ended in such a painful fashion. The disciple would be no better than the Master.

But aside from that, vicarious suffering will always compel the sympathy of man. Greater love has no man than that he will give his life for his friends. The human heart naturally responds to any genuine sacrifice. Who has not caught himself, on the receipt of some favor, audibly thanking the thoughtful friend for his kindness or his devotion? That at the moment he was a thousand miles away made no difference.

The circumstantial account of what Jesus had experienced during the last few days of his life, especially when interpreted in the light of some atonement doctrine, was enough to prompt psalms of thanksgiving in any but the most selfish hearts. No language was expressive enough to do proper obeisance to the sacred Head, now wounded, with grief and shame weighed down, now scornfully surrounded with thorns, its only crown. Innocent suffering outrages the human sense of justice and it puts the beneficiary under eternal obligations.

So, in moments of patriotic exaltation, we thank our forefathers, under the spell of oratorical persuasion, for their heroic patience, for enduring the hardships of pioneers, for laboring that we might enjoy and battling that we, their children, might have peace.

This is more than rhetoric. A worthy child must feel grateful for all this. Building monuments and observing memorials is the least it will do. It will voice its feelings in words, and then nothing will be more natural than the apostrophe of thanksgiving.

Among the Japanese Christians the custom is still observed of thus addressing the souls of the departed. When their beloved missionary, Dr. Cate, died, his spirit was invoked: "How can we who have been taught and led by you fail to be stimulated by your example to do all we can to carry out your wishes? When you fell asleep, we were given strength. . . . Be at rest. The liberality, the sympathy, the patience, the many fine traits of character which your life taught us, along with your departed spirit, will ever abide in us. You will remain our teacher for all times. You are not dead. You live and work among us still." . . . (Compare *The Open Court*, June, 1909.)

And even those believers who may refuse to submit to the spell which the cross on Calvary exerts will find in their own spiritual experiences a point of contact with the Man of Nazareth. He is the pathetic figure in history. And deep speaks unto deep. What Jesus did, or tried to do against insuperable odds, as it turned out, will elicit a response in every heart that has ever aspired or loved and lost. Mankind

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will ever be debtor to him for his life and his influence. It is natural to want to thank him for this gift.

II. The doctrine of God's transcendence.

The inane function which was once given to God of sitting apart and watching the world go round lost considerable credit when men once began to think seriously of the Pauline statement, "In him we live and move and have our being." And what little credit was left went the moment the modern conception of God took the field.

Much has been written about the rediscovery of Jesus Christ. It was the rediscovery of God that made it impossible for many a devout soul to offer prayer to Jesus. The paradox was solved—as we shall try to show—with those who took the logical step and conceded that all life and movement and being could be predicated as consisting in God. That did not debase God, and it certainly did not debase His universe.

But there was a bogey that frightened many an honest soul from going to such lengths. With most believers there has never been any serious danger that God get too near man. The difficulty has been in the other direction: God was too far off from us. The Great Unknown dwelt on the limits or, better still, beyond the limits of the cosmos, and it was the business

of prayer to bridge this yawning chasm. It is no exaggeration, but the soberest truth, when we say that for the vast majority of mankind God lives "in heaven." "Our Father who art in *us*" would be blasphemy to them. "Our Father in whom we are" would be nonsense.

Both science and theology are responsible for this condition. The physicist and the theologian, jointly, secularized the universe, so to speak, and God was pushed out, step by step, from one department to another until He reached the starting-point; creation was the jumping-off place. And the doctrine of the eternity of matter, or, what amounts to the same thing, the persistence of energy refused even that last foot-hold to the God of our fathers. Second causes were held to explain all, Law with a capital letter assumed the scepter wrested from the Almighty's hand, and the Final Cause retired beyond the reach of the finest instrument and the subtlest mind.

Does God transcend His world? Most assuredly, if He is what is generally meant by a God. Transcendence is a mighty, magnificent truth. And this truth has given theology its dignity. What is man that God should be mindful of him? Before God the nations are as a drop of the bucket, as grasshoppers, as grass that is cast into the oven and burned. He is from everlasting to everlasting. Before

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the mountains were made He was. We became, God is the ever-present I Am. Men say that astronomy enlarges the mind. Theology begins where astronomy ends. Small visions mean small ideals, small aims are incompatible with thinking God's thoughts.

It may be that the greatness of God will belittle man. Mountains make cathedrals ridiculously small. This has certainly been the practical result in Christendom. It cannot be said that Calvin's glorious scheme did justice to the freedom and the sovereignty of man, the crown of creation, difficult as we may find it to escape his logic about God. But that is due to the incapacity of the human understanding. The mind has to assent to the arguments for the greatness of God, though the heart will straightway refuse to admit the full consequences. Still, both the Calvins and the Darwins of the past succeeded in putting a great gulf between heaven and earth which it was very hard to leap. This was not their intention. Darwin, especially, protests emphatically and repeatedly in *The Origin of Species* against the idea that the rejection of special providences need be construed into a removal of God from the world. The protest was, as is usual in such cases, entirely ignored.

But no matter what the intentions were, the net result of all these speculations and investi-

gations, of theologic affirmation and scientific negation was that God had been silenced. Like Elijah of old the skeptic stood and mocked: "Cry aloud: for He is a god: either He is musing, or He is gone aside, or He is on a journey, or peradventure He sleepeth and must be awaked." But there was no voice, nor any that answered.

And lo! here was an intermediary! Jesus stood at the threshold of the modern era and revealed *his* God to man. Men had thought that those who had seen him had seen the Father. God was invisible, dwelling in a light where no man cometh; Jesus was a living, breathing, sympathizing personality. In him God descended to earth. Heaven and earth kissed each other. The word became flesh, and we beheld his glory, the glory of the unique Son of God. Moreover, this flesh-and-blood Jesus had felt our weaknesses; we were sure he would know how to help us; he had been tempted; we were sure he would make allowances. He was bone of our bone, whereas God was everlasting, without body, parts, or passions, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness etc.

It may be said, parenthetically, that these creeds with their statements concerning God would, of themselves, have been enough to drive many a hungry soul to pray to Jesus—if in

them Jesus himself had not been made even more unreal and phantastic than God. The church, as distinguished from the priesthood, was less concerned about the purity of the doctrine than about religion. It wanted to worship. And since God had quit the field and had retired into the empyrean of theologic fog Jesus became, with millions, the natural object of the manifold petitions and thanksgivings. When Jesus, too, retired under the pressure of the creeds, or rather of the temper that produced the creeds, Mary and all the saints filled the breach. The distance between God and man may be measured by the number of intermediaries thought necessary to carry the mortal's prayers to their destination. This applies to Jews, Mahommedans, Pagans and Christians—wherever the cult of saints has gained a foothold.

III. The holiness of God.

God's transcendence is of cosmic significance; His holiness is ethical. In the first place it is a question whether finite man can, by any possibility, approach God; in the second it is a question whether sinful man ought, by any canons of propriety, to approach Him. The sinner feels that he dare not come, and has no right to come, into the presence of the Just and Holy One.

It has been the weak spot in so much of our

much vaunted so-called liberal thinking that it has been frivolous in its conception of a holy God. It has tried to persuade itself into believing that whatever is is eternally right. When Renan and Emerson and Arnold wrote about the universe they did not, like Old Testament prophets, first think of the moral order of the universe, that could be broken into and shattered. Sin has been thinned out into weakness or immaturity. Murder is insanity, as the law deponeth. Twentieth century pseudo-philosophy has at last caught the old serpent and drawn her poison fangs: behold! they were nothing but an error of mortal mind.

With anyone to whom sin appears in its oldtime aspect of a monstrous diabolical wrong, a veritable snake in the garden of plenty, a holy God is sure to strike terror to the imagination. Sacrificial rites have never lacked the appeasing element; the angry god was to be mollified, the primordial demands for justice were to be satisfied. Hecatombs became, in many an instance, a sop offered to an outraged deity that wanted blood. It got blood, cataracts of blood. The history of religion is written in blood. The Druid in his grove, the Baal priest on Carmel, the Levite in the temple, the Indian under juggernaut, the dervish on his cruel hooks, all and many more swelled the sanguinary flood. What will a man not give to save his soul? Even his first-born.

It is a pleasant, but altogether delusive, flattery to suppose that Christianity could, over night, cast off this burden of our common humanity. The sacrifice, indeed, went; the final entering into the holy place, once for all time, of the great high-priest of souls completed and abolished that system for most Christians. Though even here one is bound to walk circumspectly when one thinks of the vestiges of paganism that survive in the numerous superstitious practises among supposedly Christian peoples. But the grand, aboriginal superstition has persisted through all the changes of time, namely, that a holy God can be appeased, if not through a bloody or bloodless offering, then through the intercession of some especially influential person.

The barbarism of an appeased or appeasable god is moribund, but one can easily gauge the potency of the intercession idea by a survey of our hymnology with its one hundred and one variations on the tune, "Jesus plead for me." These songs are sung today; they form a surprisingly large proportion of the contents of most hymnals.

Any possible disclaimers to the effect that Jesus would not pray to the Father for us are immediately negatived with the decisive reference to the universal practise of mankind (when did one man ever refuse to pray for another?)

and to the particular case of the Lord of whom the gospel even records a complete, ready-made sample of an intercessory prayer.

But let an intermediary, a mediator once come between an austere God and a trembling, fearful sinner and it will soon be discovered that it is not every man's privilege to preserve his doctrine of monotheism intact. There is much praying to Jesus which it would be false to call polytheistic, all the once common unitarian claims to the contrary notwithstanding; and it is a cogent question whether we shall ever discover a better formula than that of the trinity with which to explain the inexplicable, and to define the indefinable, God. Yet who would deny that for vast multitudes of Christianized people the doctrine of the trinity is absolutely indistinguishable from the crassest polytheism?

To the average mind yonder was an inaccessible being who dwelt in serene loftiness, in a purity that burned like fire. No mortal could look on him and live. And here was another being, a sympathizing man who was sinless, who had somehow escaped the universal taint. He shared God's nature and could therefore commune with Him. It is not clear how god-fearing yet god-seeking sinners could have failed to avail themselves of his good graces. Christianity said, God is love; conscience said, the greater the love the greater the holy zeal

against unrequited love; and in desperation mankind flung itself upon the bosom of Jesus. He, at least, would understand.

This line of approach to Jesus was not followed by all Christians. The person who has drawn the full consequences of the gospel truth that God is love is not impressed very much with the benefits of such a roundabout way to God. He will insist that in prayer, too, a straight line is the shortest distance between two points, especially when there are no obstructions lying between. However, there is no doubt that to many the way around is not just the best but the only possible way into heaven. It avoids the wall of living fire which is raised between the uncleanness of man and the holiness of God.

IV. The dogma of the deity of Christ.

Standing, as we do, in the midst of the battle that is going on today about the personality of Jesus Christ, and remembering how little, after all, avail the offensive debates on this age-old problem, it will be our duty to be modest about any claims or denials we may all personally be inclined to make.

Most sane people believe that Jesus was divine. It is the fine distinctions that are drawn after this is stated that invite the odium and the recriminations among a certain class of theologians.

Now when a man asseverates such a belief

it is only a matter of common politeness for the rest to take him at his word and not to give him the lie direct by telling him that he does not mean what he says, that his word "divine" does not signify divine, that he has no right to appropriate venerable language to serve his oblique purposes, or whatever else the sense of propriety may suggest at the moment. Language was made for man; and besides, no two men mean identically the same thing when they use the word "horse." Divinity, whatever it may all be, is certainly bigger than any man's—though he were a Solomon—conception about it. The person who most abuses language is he who would make it a desiccated, leathern mummy. When such a one objects: "X. does not believe in the divinity of Christ," he only means, though he does not think of it, that X. does not believe in the particular construction it has pleased the objector and his companions to put upon that flexible word "divinity." We repeat, most modern people admit that Jesus was divine.

But the ways diverge the moment we attempt definition. *Latet dolus in generalibus*, likewise in specifications! And yet there is a common ground. Even the stiffest, most inveterate Jesus-worshipper will hesitate to admit that the two terms God and Jesus are interchangeable offhand, meaning practically the same thing,

somewhat after the fashion of synonyms. There is a difference. And where there is a difference there is not identity, notwithstanding all the verbiage of the Athanasian symbol. Our clumsy, imperfect language hints at this condition, offering us the words divinity and deity (Goettlichkeit and Gottheit). Some, indeed, aver that they see no more difference between them than between the old-fashioned tweedledum and tweedle-dee, and it is not very helpful to talk about nuances to people who admit they cannot see. Suffice it to say that the two terms would not be in existence if they were not both needed to describe the true state of affairs.

And on the other hand—for it will not profit much to thresh over the musty straw of this controversy—there are people to whom the deity of Jesus Christ presents no difficulties who yet refuse, peremptorily, to pray to Jesus as God. How can these things be? asks the unsophisticated man who does not believe that consistency is a vice of small minds. We do not stop to inquire; we only state the fact that we have met with such.

In general, however, it may be claimed that the deity of Jesus and prayer to him stand and fall together. Many mortals feel the need of prayer. Jesus is God *because* they pray to him; most mortals will pray to a god when

they pray at all. Jesus is God, *therefore* they pray to him. And this is probably the main reason for worship. God and worship are coterminous. Prayer is, in a large sense, union and communion with the god or the gods of the worshipper.

The worship of saints is no exception to this general rule. It would contribute much to the clearness of thought if the undeniable fact were always given its due weight that many a venerable saint on the calendar is nothing but an old pagan god *redivivus*. Diana and Esculapius and Venus and the whole pantheon of gods could be Christianized as well as their adorers. For the nations, on assuming Christianity, were not so glibly to be cheated out of their old divinities; they burned their idols and then transferred the idol attributes to some respectable Christian names that enjoyed the odor of sanctity. They were the old friends in new faces, and the church was satisfied, and the converts were satisfied too. In St. Peter's in Rome stands a statue said to have been cast by Leo the Great from an ancient Jupiter Capitolinus, and it is now called St. Peter—the object of the veneration of millions. Which things, as Paul saith, contain an allegory.

Jesus Christ is not Marduk or any other Gentile divinity; least of all is he a myth. He was a real personality, who lived in an ascer-

tainable time, in a definite place. His moral greatness has nothing to do with the creations of man's imagination that invented three-headed gods and other monstrosities to pray to. His contemporaries, who also had some judgment, beheld in him a splendor as of another world. It took some time to draw the inevitable consequences from all the testimony of what he had said and done. These his contemporaries were like other people, and by that token, were unable to see the whole truth as it was revealed in Jesus. They could not bear it then. But when, dispassionately and without any undue haste, the sympathetic mind sifted and weighed the record it was seen that in Jesus, God Himself had walked on earth, that in him God had got nearer to humanity than ever before—and we today can say, heartily, than ever since.

These we believe to be the four chief reasons for prayer to Jesus. He deserves the thanks of mankind for his unselfish devotion to its welfare; he has bridged the yawning chasm between heaven and earth; he has brought peace to souls justly troubled about their sins, their transgressions of the laws of a holy God; he has presented himself to mankind as the very embodiment or personification, the truest expression, so far, of the great Goodness we call God.

Accordingly he has been held worthy to be praised, *quasi deo*, even until this day.

One word needs to be added. Even the Christians who cannot honestly pray to the exalted Christ cannot fairly be charged with leaving Christ out of their prayers. They pray as he taught us; they pray to God as he revealed Him; they pray in his name; and they will even say "for his sake," whatever that may mean in the circumstances. Christian prayer in a Christian land, offered by Christians, is impossible without Christ.

THE CASE OF THE MODERN MAN

This, then, is the situation. What has the typical modern to say to it? We suspect the reader will not have to go very far to find him. That this modern is a person of religious propensities will not be questioned, for he is human.

To begin with, he feels no desire to make special thanksgiving to a Jesus who lived—as he hears—1900 years ago. "Religion," says he, "is a personal relation to God, and has nothing to do with events and systems and personalities of other days. Jesus is a definite, historical fact, the most important, because the most insistent datum of history. But my religion has nothing, absolutely nothing, to do with data of history. And if historical science should ever prove that Jesus never existed (which it will not) I should still cling to faith beyond

the forms of faith." He would resent as a gross libel the attempt to dispose of him by attaching to him the name of any one theologian and leveling him to the ground with anism. What he feels is symptomatic of today, not just of one particular school.

He sympathizes with the modern spirit as applied to religion. Therefore he will have turned his back on the whole transcendental business of theology—a transcendent God simply transcends his mind and his active interests. It will always be passing strange to him that man should have had so little sense of humor as to posit such a transcendent God and in the next breath discourse on Him as though He were known in all His length and breadth and height. What man can understand, plainly, is not transcendent; and what transcends man, just as plainly, will never form the subject of his thought. And with all the mystery that surrounds the matter, God is at least held to be like us, in part. We were made in His image. If we cannot, in part, understand Him we can understand nothing.

Furthermore, the modern man no longer feels himself to be a miserable sinner. In the mouth of ninety-nine out of a hundred people who use those self-deprecatory words they are a meaningless, preposterous phrase. He knows himself to be imperfect and sinful and unholy,

but he is not miserable over it. This is plain fact. He tries to make the best of it in what he believes to be a very good world on the whole, and he trusts God for the rest. He understands the resentment of the little girl who protested: "I am not a miserable sinner. I am happy, and try to be good." Whether this is a symptom of joyous health or of a fatal disease has not been decided yet to the satisfaction of everybody. But Christianity has, in practise, decided that a sinner need not be miserable because there is an angry God to haunt one's waking moments. "For God so loved the world" that fear of Him is a virtual denial of His goodness. And "perfect love casteth out fear."

Finally, the divinity of Jesus, is, to him, no sufficient reason why he should adopt the custom of addressing the Master in prayer, as we have seen. In many cases the prayer comes first, unpremeditated, free, natural, without any antecedent verifications or weighing of probabilities. He will pray, being first a man and secondly a modern, because he has to pray, and all questions about divinity or deity are after thoughts. That a being is immensely better, greater, wiser, stronger than man, is, of itself, no more than a predisposing cause, certainly not a compelling reason why he should be worshipped. This is true though the virtues

be multiplied and magnified to infinity, for with them all God may yet be no more than a Nietzschean, apotheosized Overman.

Such are some of the characteristic beliefs which many men share today unblushingly; unblushingly because naturally. Strength is in their bones, and wisdom is in their brains, and God is in their hearts.

And still one asks: Has not something gone out of their lives that might have sweetened their repose and deepened their spiritual perceptions? With all this has not a sense of oppression taken hold of their souls?

Rationalism is a duty. We no longer sneer at a faith that reasons, any more than at a reason that confesses to have a faith. But does this rationalism get at more than half the truth? What is the *whole* duty of man? The answer comes with the reminder that every man is an incurable mystic, bound by a thousand invisible cords to the spirit-world, immersed in a sea of mystery. And here, who knows? Jesus Christ is yet to make his finest conquests.

Such are the signs of the times. Guesses thicken the air. From the gloom of the unknown are emerging ghosts, banshees, devils, dual, triple, and multiple personalities, until the universe is awir with life. They appear to be clothed with the mantle of respectability. The Mothers—as Goethe called them—the elemental

forces of nature are stirring as though preparing for a wondrous epiphany. Already science has seen fit to abandon its unbending, cavalier disdain of the mysteries. The jargon and the quackery of the Cagliostros and the Blavatskys of yesterday are in a fair way to retire before some of the more authentic and intelligible apocalypses. Thus far the unseen universe had been the limbo for gibbering fools and vile deceivers and visionary poets: who will say that they have exhausted its meaning?

And the modern man stands undecided, expectant. To him, too, will come the vision, as it did in other days, and then Jesus, the Master of the spirit, will come into his own, then men shall not be ashamed to express their trust in the powers that condition this universe, in the "God," the "Goodness," the "Life," the "Love" back of and in all—the something

"Whose dwelling is the light of setting sun,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit, which impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things."

THE CALL OF NATURE

We believe that nature has, for such people, living in such a time and having such interests, a religious significance far transcending anything which the old "natural religion" reason-

ing could yield. Nature is vastly more than a magazine stocked with "designs," to supply man with cogent arguments for the beneficence or the power of God, arguments which have been thrown into the attic of theological science to make room for the notion of purpose. Also, it is more than the "garment of God." Storehouses and garments may be very convenient, but they permit no vital, intimate relationships with thinking and loving and living man.

What is called nature, the totality of natural phenomena, is, among many other things, the manifestation of life. Nature is alive, somehow. Even matter—dead matter, they used to say—metals, crystals, worlds, as also the hypothetical molecules, atoms, corpuscles, electrons, manifest energy or are manifest energy. And energy is—

But here we are walking on air. Nature, too, is part of the great mystery in the presence of which the proudest intellect needs to cultivate a becoming modesty. Science but spells out the letters in which the riddle of the universe is written; it does not give us its solution.

The desire to commune with nature, to respond somehow to the spirit in and of this universe, is not only legitimate, it is inevitable. Though philosophy may ignore this movement, and the churches may thunder against it, and the physical sciences may ridicule it, the man we have tried to describe will still follow the

promptings of his heart. The soul seeks and finds its companion and mate. It refuses to be satisfied with an official declaration, delivered once for all, that nature is godless, or dead, or Maya—an illusion, and that one needs to turn from it to gain peace; and it is persuaded that a purely objective study of an inanimate creation is a sheer waste of time. The soul must impart itself. Like speaks to like. It listens for a response. And many among the wisest of mankind have declared, on the basis of their own inner experience, that the response has come.

It would be hasty to conclude that this whole process is only the projection into nature of what is in ourselves, making of ourselves dupes to believe what we have invented, Narcissus worshipping his own image. We feel that the something supplied by nature and inherent in it is akin to, yet different from, ourselves. And no sophistication, no rationalism can convince the average thinker that this feeling is pure illusion. He will even construct for himself a theory of an "earth-soul," though he may never have heard of Fechner, he will people this universe with demons and angels, he will extend his notion of God, just so he may satisfy the longing for *his kind*. When alone he feels himself least alone. The wings of the Presences keep up the pulsations of nature, and there is an instream-

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ing of thought and vitality we lacked before. The mystagog is in favor as never before, and, what is more, he has vindicated his right to a hearing.

A glance at the literature of this new mysticism of nature will show what a hold it has taken on the minds especially of the younger thinkers of today. There are voices not to be despised, that tell us that the more of a mystic a man is the more of a man he is. Intelligence, by itself, leads into a blind alley. Philosophy is a hodge-podge of contradictions. Will, taken as the great solvent, reduces us all to hopeless pessimists. If you do not feel it, you shall never understand it!

No matter, then, that the rationalist smiles at the word "mystic." History is on the side of the visionary. Where there is no vision the people perish. Religion is almost synonymous with it. It is the breath of life in poetry and in art. Music, if it is ever to be more than an exercise in harmonics or a pleasing exposition of mathematical formulae, must speak to the soul; it's we musicians know.

A hundred new cults, churches, lodges, leagues have got started. Much of their hocus-pocus is a pitiful commentary on the intelligence of their members, so that a man of parts is actually ashamed to join them. But they stand as a witness of one thing: that the old

rationalisms have failed to satisfy. And, to cap the climax, reluctant, proud, self-sufficient science is being forced to make terms with these phenomena.

Maeterlinck's *The Life of Bees* and its English congeners have struck a vibrant chord in the hearts of thousands. Nature books are as popular as the latest fiction. A modern school of nature-poets, with the Austrian Reiner Maria Rilke at their head, is making all nature the revealment of the omnipresent God. The Keplerbund can announce accessions of over a thousand in less than three months. And its members are recruited not from the masses who indorse every new fashion, but from the men who are thoroughly interested in the meanings of nature. They have united, according to their constitution, under a name which is the symbol of the true love of science and the deepest religious sentiment. Johannes Mueller, Ralph W. Trine, Ellen Key, Herman—to mention only a few representing the most divergent types of religious beliefs—have this in common, that they are all trying to give an answer to the youth who stands face to face with nature, mysterious, sphinx-like, caressing, insinuating, and who wants to read her riddle.

These are the prophets of the present generation. And they will speak their message even to the predicator of life and intelligence and

souls to stars and plants and animals and whole worlds. Much of it may be but clever guessing, striking one as grotesque, but it has the undeniable merit of finding sympathizers.

This tendency to make friends with nature, and with the whole universe, like a Christianized Thoreau, is not just a fad, least of all is it a literary or esthetic trick of the trade. That were too easy an explanation. There probably never was a soul that has felt deeply and thought carefully that has not, at some time, caught itself "talking" to nature. And the communion has brought relief. It has satisfied when nothing else would satisfy. It has even been apotheosized into a religion. Nature is "loved," and "revered," and "worshipped." One does not have to be a Rousseau or a Wordsworth to understand such feelings. And the thorough working out of the doctrine of divine immanence, to one who is not afraid of the old scarecrow of pantheism, has at least this much to its credit, that it has supplied man with a respectable reason for this so persistent a penchant.

Pantheism has been under the ban mainly because it seemed to make too serious inroads upon our conception of personality as applied to God. It has thus had its weakness, as every other conception is bound to have when it begins to make exclusive claims to accord with truth. "Personality" is only one of many symbols that man has

applied to God. But it has crowded hard on conceptions not included in the term personality. Anything that seemed to secure God as a person was more than welcome; everything that seemed to endanger the person was thrice anathema. And since the word had, perforce, to be filled with a human content, every theory that did not offer a divinity in the likeness of a man was, of course and as a matter of fact, held to be dangerous to faith.

Modesty has not been the most prominent virtue with many of those who have been loudest in condemning pantheism. We know but little of God, but the little we do know is a sufficient warrant for the belief that the pantheist has, in some way, got hold of a truth which might otherwise have been neglected, a truth which contributes to the enrichment of the concept God. Pantheism as an exclusive form of theism overshot the mark and robbed its followers of some of the sweetest consolations of religion. Love, devotion, prayer, consciousness, are contingent upon facts which it has unceremoniously ignored.

But the gains that were made in this direction have always been at the expense of the greatness and the super-human character of deity.

The historic puzzle how to combine the good of both sides without compounding with their attendant evils will never be solved by man.

Theology will never get beyond a compromise. There is no danger that the human side of God be lost to mankind, seeing that that is the only side we can ever know; but there is danger that man proceed in his speculations on the assumption that this human character, raised to the *n*-th power and sublimated into something superhuman, accounts for the whole God. To throw pantheism overboard, bag and baggage, simply because it involved the denial of what is very dear to the heart, is hardly the fair way of doing justice to its positive contribution to the knowledge of God. Whether it is a brave thing to do is also worth pondering.

The impetus given to modern thinking by Herder and Schleiermacher and Goethe is enough to show the folly of such a procedure. And the profound influence of the writings of Spinoza, even today, though they are a warning that the mind, unaided, is incapable of solving the logical contradiction involved in pure pantheism, would have to be put down as one of the absurdest phenomena of modern times—on the theory that his speculations about the “Universal Being” are unadulterated nonsense.

But restore God into the universe, where the Greek found Him, where the poet feels Him, and where natural theology, grudgingly, has been allowed to discover Him, to show, mainly, how unsatisfactory a revelation in and through

nature can be made as compared to a revelation above and in spite of nature; dare to trust that it is impossible to *thin out* or dilute God or that man should be able to attribute to Him what is not in Him and of Him and look for "God in nature and nature in God;" say with Sir O. Lodge that the term God, if it is to have any meaning at all, must at least include everything we have so far been able to discover as existent in the universe—and then Mrs Browning's:

"Earth's cram'd with Heaven
And every common bush afire with God,"

becomes more than a banal, threadbare poetic conceit, but the sober proclamation of a joyous fact.

And then, too, you have at least one reason which the modern man will listen to, for the worship, not only of Jesus, very God of God, but of every embodiment of God. If there is any revulsion it will have to come, not because of the poverty of this conception, but because of the embarrassment of riches it offers, God is no beggar, that man should exhaust the richness of His being.

For, in the last analysis, it is the God, wherever He is—and, *ex hypothesi*, He is everywhere—that compels the worship. That is true of all religion, from that of the lowest fetish worshipper to that of the emancipated trans-

centenalist. He would be a bold man who should put down the hundreds of apostrophes addressed by a Wordsworth to the Powers of the Air, the Sea, the Mountain, the Grove, as so much fantastic makebelieve, and attempt to draw a hard and fast line between them and prayer.

The most certain of all the facts ascertainable about the universe is that it is from first to last profoundly spiritual. The life of the spirit is the fundamental truth. Dead matter, the idola that has bewitched whole generations of scientists, is nothing but a huge assumption. The world is more than a mechanism.

It was as early as 1869 that Hirn, the French physicist, announced his three ultimate principles: the atom, the force, the soul; the atom acted upon by the force, and the force acted upon by the soul. And more recently Mendelejeff, Russia's greatest chemist, has written: "The mark of our modern scientific realism is the recognition of three irreducible principles, matter, energy, and spirit." This may be bad news to the confirmed monist of either wing, bound to resolve the many into the one, but it certainly permits a belief that the spiritual conception and interpretation of this universe is perfectly reasonable, and, what is final with many a man today, thoroughly "scientific." Whatever more the world may be, it is at least responsive to man's spiritual cravings and akin

to his higher self, otherwise our Wordsworths are all so many incarnations of Peter Bell. And the heart confirms the statement.

But how does God—the God of ages past—fare in this loosening of erstwhile rigid ideas? Is not a God who is thus indissolubly bound up with the universe, matter, energy, and all, dangerously near to extinction? That He is different from the God as imagined by past generations is true, and that is no unmitigated loss. Furthermore, He is, beyond a doubt, different from the imaginings of the present. No mind hath read the secret thoughts of God, least of all he who pretends to know what God is and what He cannot be. All our ideas are but approximations. But does the present emphasis on a sympathizing, self-imparting, all-embracing being, inextricably bound up with a blundering humanity and a world full of contradictions, really offer sufficient satisfaction to guarantee its general truthfulness? For, needless to say, a false god will not, in the long run, satisfy the heart of man.

Now to some the notion of a God who is subject to all the vicissitudes of this varying universe is a gigantic absurdity. A sympathizing, i.e. a suffering God, a God who needs matter and force to express himself, who grows with man, whose goodness is not just a babe's unearned innocence, but a positive achievement,

who feels the deprivations of his children, who can live in their life and die in their death—imagine, if possible, a dead God!—: to call such ideas confusing would be too mild; many would call them nothing but the starkest nonsense.

And yet even a “suffering” God hints at a fact in the cosmic process; historic Christianity, for one thing, is unthinkable without it. In some way the logical contradiction has got itself metamorphosed into a mere paradox that has captivated the mind. It would be doing the fathers of the church little honor to suppose that they had rationalized over this matter, but they felt certain that He had borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. The common man to whom the Athanasian creed is more a jumble of incompatibilities than a sacred symbol, thanks to his training of the sense of reality, may repudiate the theology. But he cannot repudiate the hunger of his soul. Surely, the venerable fathers were above trying to mystify mankind with a huge, preposterous trick; they meant to express what may be inexpressible, but is still a truth, namely, that God entered into Jesus (the modern creed-maker might prefer to say, as into all men so also into Jesus) and, for humanity, is practically nonexistent except in so far as He does thus enter into and reveal himself in a proper medium which we can understand.

Music is, but not without the ear; light is, but not without the eye; love is, but not without the heart; God is, but not without His universe. And in this universe—or multiverse—humanity represents the goal. And in this humanity Jesus of Nazareth represents the ideal.

Whether immanence or transcendence is held to carry the larger portion of the truth will depend almost wholly upon one's training and personal prejudices; to many it will ever be a question whether it is really worth while to busy one's self with the riddle and whether the idea really solves any practical questions. Truly, he who wants but three meals a day and peace at any price and is satisfied to travel the safe road worn smooth and hard by the countless feet of the generations that asked no questions for conscience's sake, just so he get his soul saved, will thereby escape some very trying difficulties.

What, for instance, becomes of the problem of evil? How often that challenge has been supposed to settle all debate! Evil—a part of God! There is nothing further to be said. *Anathema sit!*

Those who live in glass houses are not generally supposed to throw stones. To be ready with the taunt that immanence does not explain evil is hardly a gracious attitude especially when assumed by those whose theology has

simply capitulated before this *bete noire* as a "mystery," or fallen back on an anti-god, more or less devilish, much as if a pestilence were explained by a comet. The pot, besides, should not call the kettle black, especially in the theological world. To the challenge, "What do you do with the problem of evil?" the believer in immanence may quietly say, "I leave it exactly where you have left it. If the non-solution of this ancient puzzle is a valid objection to my views, it is no less a valid objection to your views; for, confessedly, you have notoriously failed to get it abolished or even explained, and so we are companions in ignorance and in misery. Let us stop throwing stones and calling names, and be thankful for the little light that shines into our lives!"

Plainly, the you're-another argument has no scientific or philosophical value; but it has a practical value if it only reminds the human understanding of its limitations. "Let knowledge grow from more to more, but more of reverence in us dwell."

The argument that may be drawn from nature in the matter of goodness or evil is, at best, a two-edged sword. It was early seen that the proving of a beneficent God or a beauty-loving God from a good or a beautiful world was a sure way of getting into a most embarrassing situation. It was worth no more than the ana-

logous proving of a devil or some such maleficent being from the world's evil, though it were defined as only the absence of good, or the relatively good compared to the relatively best. For to talk of a permissive God is little better than a quibble, and besides, leaves the difficulty exactly where it was before. Mankind owes much to the teleological argument—among other things the wholesale fitting of facts to theories. That God, providentially, supplied mankind with cork trees in Spain to enable us to make stoppers for bottles—to use the classic illustration—might pass muster; but when said bottles were filled with disease-producing whiskies the beneficence had to abdicate. Naturally such a flexible theory could not long satisfy the thinker. He was led to wonder what kind of a teleology the drunkard who emptied the bottle might construct. Or, eliminating the disturbing factor of freedom, he asked himself what kind of an appeal this teleology would make to the luckless fish that dangles from the hook of the theological hunter, especially as regards the special creation of this particular fisherman and that devilish hook and line which prove his speedy ruination? Would the fish reflect on how beneficent a scheme it is to be skinned and absorbed by the King of Creation? Teleology, it began to appear, rested on too shifting a basis to be of much use for apologetic purposes.

This was seen even by so devout a soul as Pascal, who begins his well-known thoughts on the existence of God with a summary rejection of all proofs drawn from nature. "I admire," wrote he, "the boldness with which these persons undertake to speak of God, in addressing their discourses to the ungodly. Their first chapter is devoted to proving the existence of Deity by the works of nature." He did not, it is true, reject these so-called proofs on purely intellectual grounds so much as for practical reasons, Scripture with its heavens declaring the glory of God etc., acting as a check for him. But his own experience was enough to persuade him that such proofs gave the Christian but a poor support and that nothing was more calculated to bring contempt upon it. "It is a mark of feebleness to prove God from nature." The splendid unconsciousness of the misery of this world which makes Bossuet's rhetoric so serene and majestic, prophesying smooth things, is at a world's remove from the agonizing, distraught temper of Pascal who challenges heaven to explain and justify the contradictions of nature.

Pascal and Bossuet represent the two types of the mind which looks out upon the world. Four eyes see more than two. And the world is not yet exhausted.

WHAT IMMANENCE CONTRIBUTES TO WORSHIP

It is evident that immanence, the modern word to conjure with, fails to dispose of many of the exasperating riddles which the past has bequeathed to the present. It is not the great cure-all and solve-all in the sickly and shadowy world of doubt. It fails us when we apply it to some of the personal interests of mankind. With certain reservations we may say of it what Froude said about the pantheistic system of Spinoza: that the spiritual life which alone gives meaning to humanity glides away before the dissecting knife and leaves it but a corpse to work upon. But this is true of every intellectual attempt to grasp being.

“Thought is deeper than all speech,
Feeling deeper than all thought;
Souls to souls can never teach
What unto themselves was taught.

We are spirits clad in veils;
Man by man was never seen;
All our deep communing fails
To remove the shadowy screen.

Heart to heart was never known,
Mind with mind did never meet;
We are columns left alone
As a temple once complete.”

Christopher P. Cranch.

One solid contribution to the subject of christology can be put down to its credit. The idea of an immanent God has opened to thou-

sands, and will open to many more as soon as its implications are realized, the only avenue of approach in sight to God in Jesus Christ, the savior and helper of men.

The old theological reasoning had, with large numbers, had its day. They had got past the stage of the "Jesus cult." This stage had satisfied the heart but not the intelligence. The next stage was characterized by a supreme contempt for all saint-worship, mariolatry, relic-veneration, and the like. Prayers to Jesus were here put into the same category. It now became a settled conviction that there is but one God, who would give His glory to none other. If God was not jealous His worshippers would be jealous for Him with a burning jealousy. This satisfied the mind that craved for unity, but not the heart that wanted sympathy. The third stage brought the solving word. Men will worship God, nothing but God, wherever He is. And where is He? He is everywhere. He is in Jesus. God was and is in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself. Let it be said once more, it is the God, in the last analysis, that alone can compel worship; whether He comes to man in human form, or on the wings of the whirlwind, or in the still small voice of conscience, makes little difference. The synthesis was complete: heart and head are at peace with one another. Those who have never been

forced to fight the matter out to a finish will hardly appreciate the relief that the gospel of the indwelling spirit of God has brought to man.

There are, indeed, many who have never felt the difficulty which some of the popular elements of Christian worship present to a mind that is so constituted as to be forced to invade even the holy of holies and analyze the sacred feelings of prayer. The great majority of Christians would probably deny, offhand, that their homage to the exalted Christ involved the least usurpation of God's supreme rights. The problem does not exist for them. And whatever the solution is which in the end will be most profitable, it will have to come from other sources. An ounce of experience is, in such things, worth more than a ton of speculation.

What suggestions have come from that quarter have too often been colored with the wellnigh offensive tendency to find in all negative results the expression of a willful and blind skepticism. Sympathy has never distinguished those who have taken it upon themselves to run down suspicious innovations. Consequently the first alarm that was sounded—the echoes are still reverberating in the woods—was to save the inherited christology. The theology could go begging. Philosophy was ruled out of court. Science was balked. A vast array of ecclesiastical scare-crows fluttered in the breeze to keep

the enemy from the sacred precincts of Christian prayer. It was "proved" (probably with some quotations from the fourth gospel) that it was absurd to have any scruples and that only hypercriticism would ever have thought of muddying the clear waters of the received faith.

It cannot be said, in spite of all efforts at popularizing the modern results of biblical scholarship, that the popular trend is in the direction of a careful study of the moot questions of criticism. The average Christian is like the faithful son of the Catholic church—he believes what the church believes, though it would puzzle him sorely sometimes to tell what that belief might be. If correct belief or opinion—"orthodoxy"—were the condition of salvation there would have to be a new adjustment of values which would play havoc with many a church—for they cannot all be correct!

With the critical methods we have nothing to do at present; as for the critical temper, that can be antidoted no more than an inborn aptitude for learning mathematics or languages. One man dislikes music, a second has red hair, a third, forsooth, is critical: such idiosyncracies are not to be changed or deplored. They must be accepted. It is the results—not unmarred by uncertainty and rashness and quite orthodox-like dogmatism—that alone concern us here.

These results can be described with approxi-

mate correctness in the simple statements that our speculations concerning Jesus Christ have had to take their place in the natural order of modern thinking, that a definite line has been drawn between the facts of his life and the facts of faith, and that, if Christian worship is to be justified at all, it must be justified in a way that takes account of the new vision of God which many thinking, spiritually minded men, not scientists by profession, have declared has come to man.

Such men are among the most reverent disciples of Jesus, and they deny that the lily of the valley needs any gilding to be made beautiful, or that an aureole around the Lord's head adds anything to his spiritual dignity. They prefer the real Jesus, so far as he can be recovered, walking in the midst of men as a divine guide to the Father, to a byzantine fresco hung up in the vaulted arches of this earth's cathedral, darkened with the smoke of incense and incrustated with the manifold layers of color which pious souls have added to enhance his unearthly beauty.

And such men pray. But the chances are that when they pray they will only rarely be drawn to commune with an exalted Jesus who acts as a substitute for God, or an interlocuter and mediator warding off the darts of wrath. They will pray to God directly and not ask

anybody, "*Ora pro nobis.*" Their heavenly Father is near enough to hear them, and good enough to answer, if that be wise, without the intervention of a third person who has a kinder heart or a deeper sympathy or a louder voice or a greater influence to bring worshipper and worshipped together.

They will be careful not to give room to the thought that there is a special advantage in shifting the direction of prayer. And if all this seems too revolutionary—religion is the most conservative force on earth!—and if the heart demands a face-to-face relation with Jesus as the best revelation of God humanity knows of, they will, to say the least, refrain from any petitions which degenerate into such sentiments as: "When the full light of heavenly day—Reveals my sin of dread array, Say thou hast washed them all away,—O say, thou plead'st for me." Whether such a praying relationship between them and Jesus involves, necessarily, a similar relationship to Mary, the dead, and all other souls here and beyond, will have to be decided by the individual worshipper.

One cannot too often insist that this is done to glorify God and to honor His servants. The present day Christian respectfully demurs to the gratuitous assumption that his attitude implies any disloyalty to the person of Jesus. A single glance at the pages of church history

will convince one that the monopoly of such a loyalty and of the desire to follow and to obey Jesus is not held by those who sing the Coronation Hymn with the old-time fervor and with its old-time meaning. There is a growing brotherhood in the churches, with a spiritual bond, recruited from the various denominations, and vitalized by the desire to establish the kingdom of love, though the theological heavens fall. Its members speak the same language—the language of the heart. The life of the spirit is of more importance to them than the most perfect intellectual assents and agreements.

Sometimes they are charged with taking liberties with the inherited language of Christianity. They use the old words but with a new meaning, a most prolific source of misunderstanding. This does not appear honest to those who believe that the meanings of words are unalterably fixed. This is unfortunate, but inevitable. Mankind today will not do; though it be construed into a sign of insincerity, what mankind has never done: invent new terms when old ones serve just as well. The terms God and salvation have never been yoked to fixed, definite, universally accepted ideas. Anyone who has his doubts need only ask the first six men he meets for a definition of religion, and analyse the results. The privilege which Jesus and Paul enjoyed, the compulsion that was upon them,

thus to adapt the old word to the new life, is an integral part of man's intellectual being. No man can escape this necessity, not even those who resent the ensuing confusion.

Only, the hand of nature must not be forced. It should never be forgotten that the instinct of the church was essentially correct when it opposed those who went too fast in applying to Jesus Christ and his world the new world conceptions that were bound to arise. But these things had to come. They grew out of the memory of this wonderful personality.

The human heart will, in the end, be true to its ideals. The ideal in religion was expressed by none better than by Jesus. His influence was the one essential thing. The Christian church would never have been without Paul, but Paul would never have been without Jesus. All our speculations are based on the life. The life's the thing—the explanations, the guesses, the creeds and fine spun theories all point back to that Galilean appearance which gave history a new start. God was in Christ and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten Son of God, full of grace and truth. The hopes of the ages centered in him; we thought that it was he who would redeem Israel. The personality had drawn us nearer to God, just as the fourth gospel anticipated.

It was no part of the original gospel as pro-

claimed by him that one should have to take a definite stand towards him, except in so far as he stood for the messenger of God; but the message and the messenger were so intimately related that he himself soon became the touchstone of religion. Not what he said about God, but what he was through God, has become the criterion for those who have learned of him.

This opened the flood-gates of speculation and almost swamped the message the recovery of which has been the task of modern criticism.

And now that we are beginning to feel solid ground under our feet once more and can ascertain, within reasonable limits, what his business was and what he wanted to say we are willing to indorse the report, never man spoke as he spoke.

And this admission, when it comes from the camp of comparative religion, of the *religions-geschichtliche* wing, carries somewhat more weight than do the foregone conclusions of the schools that made it their business, by hook or by crook, to prove the Christ from above.

The gospel as proclaimed by Jesus is still the standard according to which souls are being judged, and since no one could apply this standard as well as he it was inevitable that our weal or our woe should be decided by our attitude towards his person.

To say that the worship of such a one is

a superstition does not help to explain the power he has over mankind. "Who say ye that I am?" is still the test question. And the "ye" are not Paul and John, nor Stalker and Holtzmann and Sabatier, not even Matthew and Mark and Luke, but the individual Christians. Peter's testimony means less to the modern man, be he scholar, or artist, or artisan, than the personal verification of that power in God's messiah. *We* have believed and know that he is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

The modern is heartily tired—some of our theologians have not discovered it yet!—of the fine distinctions in the Godhead, of the antithesis between divinity and humanity, between the natural and the supernatural. The fiction of the universal man, which has not yet been banished from respectable society, affects him as would a universal star, or animal, or plant. He who has once thought himself into the present, real throbbing world with its mysterious, illimitable God, so great and yet so near,—closer than breathing and nearer than hands and feet, the poet says—who has outlived the stage where it was natural to imagine a God stepping out of heaven into a lesser earth, who hesitates to assert, 'Here matter ends and mind begins,' who believes all nature miraculous, and who feels that a humanized God is as reasonable as a dei-

fied man (both being mysteries) will refuse, categorically, to spend any time in constructing doctrines about the nature of Jesus.

Something survived the death of Jesus. The resurrection stories are not needed to prove that, in fact, do not prove that. But the history of 1900 years supplies a proof which no sensational discovery of science or radical result of criticism will ever weaken. The cross was a blank denial of many claims and cancelled many hopes; but it also shows that the little we know of his life, the little that was expressed in his life was not the measure of Jesus' greatness.

History does not say all, though it says much. The Christian consciousness has not abdicated at the bar of modern criticism. And while it should be cheerfully admitted that this consciousness has nothing to do with the proofs of historical facts, and that the historical method alone is competent to pass on the truth of such facts, the inner light will always help to determine the spiritual meaning of the facts so ascertained.

That is the reason why the fourth gospel, with all its guess-work and its theology, is still accepted as essentially true to life. If it does not present many indubitable facts, it at least presents the true spirit.

WHAT JESUS IS TO US TODAY

The Kalthoff-Drews answer, the socialist an-

166 THE DILEMMA OF THE

swer, the therapeutic answer to the clamoring of the heart for a savior leave a void which is the best proof that they have failed to hit upon the truth.

Jesus is the inspiration of the modern world. The comparisons with Buddha and other inspirers of various ages and peoples will never satisfy the interested parties on either side. It is perfectly proper and rather profitable to compare the genius of Christianity and that of Buddhism, for here we have authentic facts, spread over many years, to correct any too exuberant bias and to hold prejudice down to reality. But as for the personalities that stand back of these two religions, both of them are so enshrouded in mystery that any parallel is sure to beg the question of superiority to begin with, and will probably break down through lack of sympathy. An educated mussulman will prove Islam *the* religion of common sense; a Swami Vivekananda is sure that Vedanta is the key to the truth; and tomorrow's cult will dethrone all the gods of the pantheon and put in their place a new divinity, the very phoenix of goodness. But this subjectivity can be at least regulated, if not wholly removed, in the study of what the various religions have done for humanity.

This study is not altogether agreeable, for to raise one hero in the rank means, with many,

the relative degradation of all others, and it is not made easier by the bald charge, made on the basis of what is worst in the heart of man, that religion is a bar to all true progress. The Sanballets are not all dead yet. That sort of thing generally winds up with the peurile appeal to the world to have done with the old gods and to start a new and only true ism. A fatality that dogs these new messiahs is their unconscionable lack of humor.

Now, much as it may go against the grain of some, the influence of Jesus in the western world is absolutely unescapable. This is not a matter of choice. The deliberately anti-christian man of the world has to submit to it. Whatever our civilization is, for good or for bad, it would not be what it is if 1900 years ago Jesus had not been born in an obscure village in Palestine. No amount of sophistication can get around that. In a spirit of paradoxical bravado one may, for a change, speak of the influence of civilization on Christianity; in general this would be putting the cart before the horse.

The facts of Christian experience, the events of many centuries show the Christ to be alive forevermore. In his own field he admits no rivals. In other fields others may be supreme. In what is called the modern world Christ is the one deciding factor. There is none more

important. "The atmosphere of Europe has been saturated for some fifteen centuries with Christian principles and however far the rebellion against the Church may have spread, it may still be called the Moral University of the world,—not merely the greatest, but the only great School of Virtue existing. While this is so it is idle for any virtue that springs up in its neighborhood to claim to be independent of it. Christian influences are in the air; our very conception of virtue is Christian; the tone, the habits of sentiment and language—in short, all the associations of virtue—have been furnished by the discipline of the Christian Church." (*Ecce Homo*.) And the influence of the church for good was dependent upon the personality of her Lord.

But this falls far short of doing justice to the situation. The fact of this influence being granted, what is it that thus secured and secures the place of Jesus in modern life?

And here the so-called liberal Christian joins with the traditional theology in announcing his belief that Jesus is, in very fact, the savior of our lives. That this savior should have presented himself under different aspects to different schools in different ages, need disturb no one. Many minds, many ideas. That the accepted meaning was not always the correct meaning, the history of doctrine abundantly

shows. Orthodoxy is no guarantee of correctness; its theology was not even certain to be biblical, which, on the assumption of its champions, was enough to condemn it.

One chapter, at least, is closed. The modern world can get no help out of any theory of makebelieve; imputation, redemption, propitiation, with their suggestion of subterfuge, are hardly compatible with the dignity of Deity. The saviorship of Jesus no longer implies the juridical fiction of a justification, conceived in legal or sacrificial terms. Paul and the Old Testament did not delimit the plan of salvation. The Jesus-paid-it-all, I-lay-my-sins-on-Jesus sentiment, the language of a lawyer or of a priest, utterly fails to interest. We think less of propitiation than of the power we lack to avoid sin. We still hear the cry "Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But the answer is sure to come: "I thank God—through Jesus Christ"—who is the deliverer; not a Hercules in fury, or a Prometheus unbound, not a God out of the machine to readjust the universe and "save the world," but a savior who came to show us the way to God and to show us how that way might be travelled. Dale states the case tersely when he says (*Atonement*, p. 336) that whatever we may say about the remission of sins, it does not follow that the remission of sins in-

cludes the blessings which are necessary to complete our salvation.

It was perfectly natural for Paul to make so much of justification; it is no less natural that the emphasis should have shifted to the new life which Jesus made possible for us to-day. So the death of the Savior, as the one great factor in the work of "redemption," lost some of its meaning to the modern man; he refuses to separate it—as Paul practically did—from the totality of the life. The power of the blood, with all its possibilities for fetish-worship and Christianized magic, at the best, was never an unobjectionable concept.

But to stop here were to leave a wrong impression.

All Christians believe in the forgiveness of sins. They also believe in the life everlasting—and that is, after all, the issue towards which all things converge, the one positive towards which all negatives tend. In Jesus the possibilities of that life were manifested to the world. The death of the Nazarene was a sign of how seriously he took his mission of establishing this new regime in the hearts of his friends.

Historically, the whole theology of the church is founded in the meaning of this one episode—the death on the cross. As has since happened to other offensive things in Christendom, the

gibbet's offense was turned into a glorious apology. It is the guarantee of the goodness of God. Practically, the church is finding herself at last—it was high time!—face to face with the very life, the person of Jesus. And the Christian consciousness gives triumphant testimony that here is one indeed who can show us the Father's love, and thereby bring life and immortality to light.

Thus the saviorship of Jesus is inextricably bound up with his educative mission—"to show us the Father." The old theology subdivided this work into three parts: the formal teaching, the miracles, and the influence of his personality.

Nothing can better illustrate how the modern mind has outgrown this tendency to classify the factors of Jesus' life than the fact that the first and the second have so far receded into the background as to be nearly invisible.

The teaching has been so sublimated in the furnace of literary criticism until Harnack can say without troubling the spirits that all that we can know about the teaching of Jesus—barring the first three gospels—can easily be written on a single quarto page. That is, by itself, insufficient as the basis for a world-religion.

With the second the case is still more parlous. Miracles are about tabooed in many quarters.

It is characteristic of the feelings in theological circles generally that in a representative gathering of the church's guardians the ingenuous remark can be dropped that it was unsafe in a mixed audience to discuss miracles freely! Reputations might suffer, in truth, if all spoke their minds freely.

It is probably true that much which is said about the miracles as a special intrusion of God into the universe is based upon a misconception of what this universe is and of what God is; but the ominous retiring of miracle as a reliable revelation of the Father shows, at the very least, that as an aid to faith today it can easily be overworked.

Frances Power Cobbe was one speaking of the absurdity of founding religion on histories of miracles. "Ah, les miracles!" exclaimed D'Azeglio, "je n'en crois rien. Ce sont de coups d'état célestes." Whether the remark was a perfectly fair one may be doubted; but the exceptional in nature—and nothing that happens in nature is supernatural—is certainly no safe criterion in judging what God is any more than a coup d'état is the expression of the normal development of a government.

The third subject—the personality—has taken possession of the field. It is another case of "He must increase, but I must decrease."

The Johannine "Who hath seen me, hath

seen the Father," gets very near to the core of this new theology—which is as old as Christianity. The Christian believes that in Jesus we got nearer to the heart of God than ever before. God has always been our Father, but we lacked the power to grasp the fact. Then His interlocuter came—"This is the Father's good pleasure," he told us; "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work;" "Who doeth His will, he is my brother." And better than that—he lived a life so pure and godly that these chance remarks seemed perfectly natural, and the eyes of men were opened.

Many men have lived since his time, and many have spoken wise words. The strength and the wisdom of the past has helped them to do marvelous things. Standing on the shoulders of so many generations, they have enjoyed a large vision that has brought comfort to weak souls. We have learned to look with sympathy upon the wise men of other eras and are anxiously studying their bibles for more light. But the discipline of comparative religion endorses the ancient report that never another man spoke as he spoke or was what he was.

The exceptional character of Jesus must always modify the thought that he is our great exemplar. The case is probably overdrawn when Forrest says (*The Christ of History and of Experience*, p. 308), "As a mere example He

is no encouragement to us, for His moral experience has different conditions from ours." Even the "mere example" of a perfect, sinless being may help a sinner to aspire. A blind man may be depressed at the thought that he must go through the world with reality at one entrance quite shut out, yet he is helped by the eye-sight of his friends. But it is a fact that "the peculiarity of His attitude is that it cannot be imitated. Here is a note we cannot sound. It is as if He said, I am first; there is no second." The best Christian dare not say, As he was thus will I be—it needs but a fair trial to disillusion him; he may only say, As he was thus ought I to be. Jesus represents humanity at its best.

We cannot imitate Jesus. So be it. It is not wise that we should. Every man's main business is to be true to himself. But this is facilitated when one has learned how others have done that. An ideal is an inspiration. This is no less true when that ideal is associated with a definite personality. Jesus was some of the things that we desire to be, that we imagine as the standard of life to which Paul aspired and to which we shall aspire until we shall have reached the fulness of the stature of the manhood of Christ.

THE STANDARD APPLIED TO LIFE

Whatever the reason may have been, Jesus

avoided, on principle, the giving of an elaborate set of regulations which was sure to go to pieces, as monasticism abundantly testified, when erected into a final authority on matters of conduct. His kingdom was not of this world. His business was so important that he could ill spare the time, even if he had ever thought of doing so, to accomplish work which others might accomplish just as well. His whole natural bent was of a kind to render it antecedently improbable that he would care to make a Code Napoleon, or the laws of a Genevan theocracy, or the rules of the Franciscan order. In such matters his followers were to follow the traditional authorities, Moses and the prophets. They too had spoken of God and for God.

The life, fragmentarily recorded though it is, warrants no other conclusion. It is a most inadequate conception which seeks in the New Testament a text-book on Christian casuistry, which makes the Sermon on the Mount a law-book for the Republic of God and metamorphoses its reputed author into a second Moses.

But one thing such a "sermon" does indicate: it shows that the standards of Jesus could be expressed in simple terms, and that they were not meant to be unattainable. There are many precious stones lying loose in the gospels which the artist in Matthew has refused to fit into his brilliant mosaic; here and there we

detect the hand that rejects the material not suited to his design, that cuts some promising gem to set off the beauty of a wonderful picture. But taken all in all this literary production shows better than anything else what Jesus stood for. The Sermon on the Mount is not the whole of Christianity, as some have imagined; but nothing else, taken by itself, can so well teach what was the Master's aim.

For the sake of definiteness, then, rather than completeness, it will be practicable to indicate the nature of Jesus' thought as there expressed.

Reduced to the lowest terms, we have, after the beatitudes, the following clear-cut injunctions:

Let your beneficent light shine!

Change nothing about the Scripture!

Do not get angry!

Forgive!

Do not commit adultery!

Pluck out the offending eye, or hand, or foot!

Do not divorce your faithful wife!

Do not swear!

Do not oppose evil!

Love your enemies!

Perform your righteousness, your devotions, your mortifications, in secret!

Do not babble in prayer!

Pray as I teach you: Our Father who art in heaven etc.!

Do not gather earthly riches!
Do not worry about life, food, and clothing!
Seek first the Kingdom of God and His
righteousness!

Do not be censorious!

Do not waste your treasures!

Remember that persistent prayer is always
heard!

Always, fair play!

In life, choose the narrow way!

Shun lying prophets!

That is all; the outline, so to speak, of a Christian ethic. These are not rules, to be modified with many a *but* and *if*. As rules of conduct they lack something, otherwise it would be easy to construct a perfectly normal Christianity. Jesus was free to adapt the Old Testament to his purposes; it is not surprising that his disciples, once they had learned to follow the Master, once they had learned that his authoritative personality was more important than the rules, felt free to carry this beginning to its logical conclusion.

The story of this movement is told in the historic effort of the early church to make a clean sweep of the old legal system, culminating in the glorious liberty of the children of God. As rules, these commands and prohibitions were sure to work havoc, for they still permitted man to neglect the weightier matters. Here

monasticism came to grief. Here a Tolstoy was sure to alienate many who otherwise would have lent a sympathetic ear.

Man will do anything for his religion. He will obey the absurdest rules; and he will break the most sacred injunctions with equal conscientiousness. The old negro's statement was a perfectly sober one: "I have broken every one of the commandments, but, thank the Lord! I haven't lost my religion!"

It is not the Jewish itinerant teacher, speaking under the stress of certain local restrictions, who guides the twentieth century; it is not the interpreter of the Mosaic code of laws; it is not even the preacher of the sermon on the hillside—we were not there to catch the veritable words of power that made fishermen into world-conquerors: our authority is the spirit of the loving, living Christ. And where one has the opportunity to interpret the principles of such an one it seems a despicable thing to haggle over the *ipsissima verba* relating to mere contemporary conventions, as many of them do.

Arranging these sayings and all else which is in any way related to that wonderful personality in their proper perspective, we can see that Jesus is still our authority, because he has supplied us with a spiritual basis for our religion. The history of the church is largely a history of evasion; but we cannot rid our-

selves of the haunting thought that if we could only live up to such a standard it would be well with the world, and many a hard task would solve itself. Even our social problems would fade away in the light of the social gospel, though we must admit that Jesus had but little to say about work and play and capital and pauperism and the insanity of war.

For in the religious world, which controls every other world, it is none other than Jesus whose words are decisive for the western mind. For his sake we are willing to quit our theorizing; for his sake we will abolish our scruples about the mint, anise, and cummin of belief; in his name we can now call all men brothers; in his name we can call upon God, who is the Father of us all, as the One who is over all, and in all, and through all. We can say, in effect, what M. Claudius once wrote: "He who cannot believe in Jesus must see to it how he will manage without Him. We cannot do that. We need someone to help us live and to help us die, and we know of no other person whom we would rather have. As He believed, so we believe; we can safely put ourselves into His and our Father's hands."

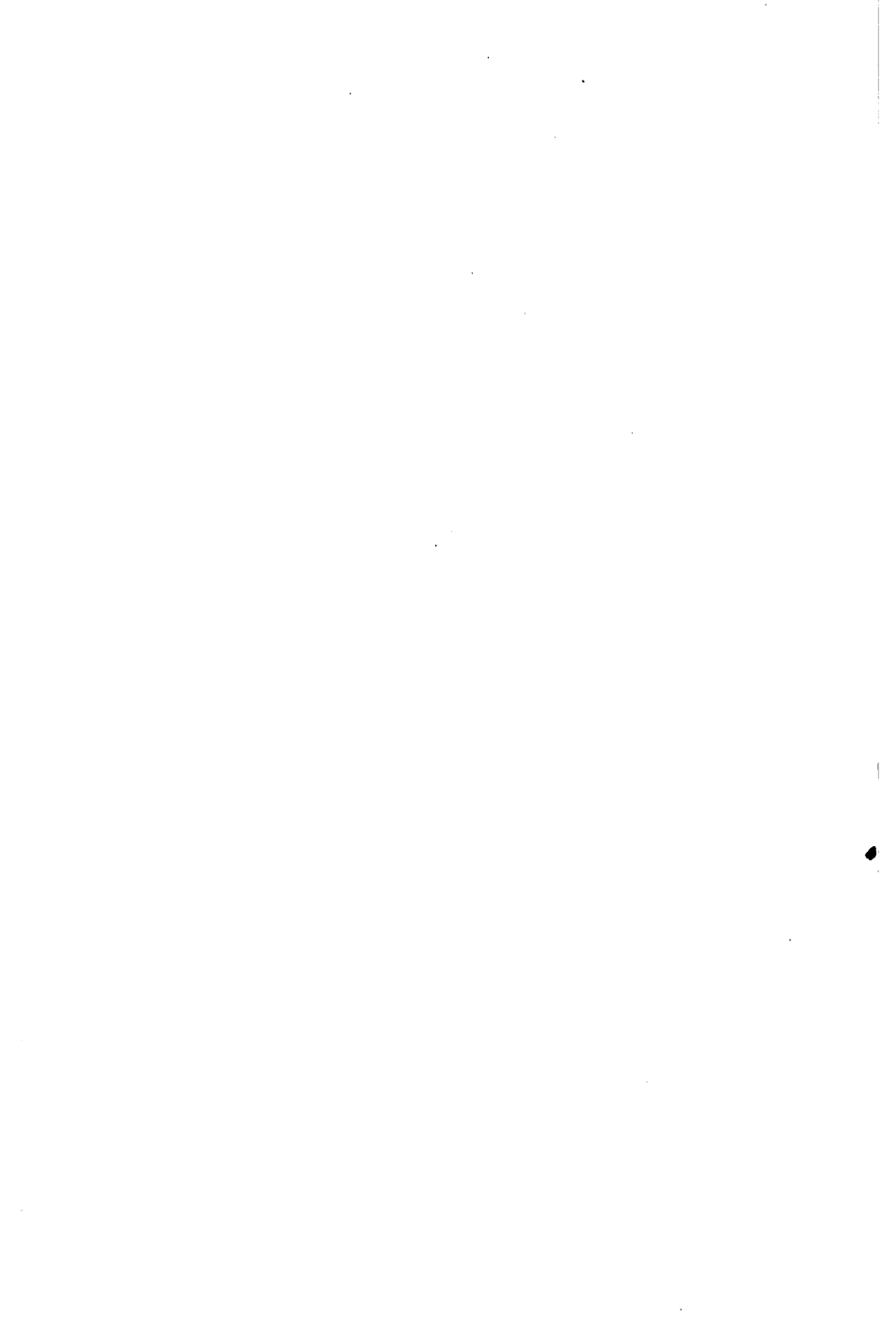
Thus we have reached the end of our tortuous road. Some will ask themselves, was it worth travelling? Any road is worth travelling that leads us to God.

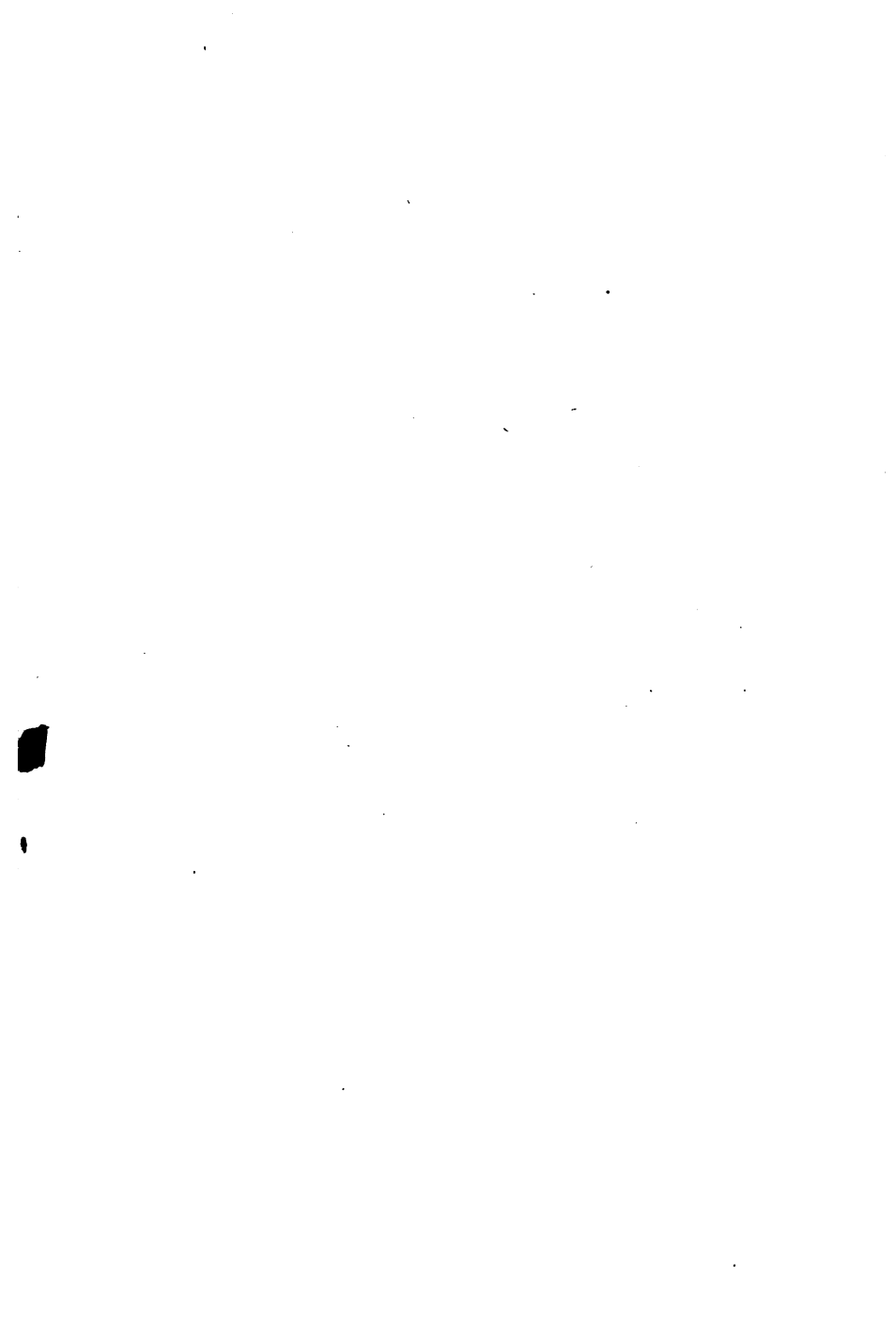
This is what the journey has yielded:

Theology has always engaged the mind of thinking man. Man is a seeker after God. In this search the emergence of Jesus Christ has become determinative. It was Paul who was responsible for the shifting of the interest among the early Christians. He owed all to the supernatural Christ; to magnify this his Savior and Lord became his life-work. The magnification of the Lord can be traced throughout the New Testament. For the church the Easter message that the Lord was alive forevermore was decisive. It was natural that this Lord of Life should become the inspirer of a new religion. We can ascertain but little of the earthly life of Jesus, but it is reasonably certain that his ultimate aim was, not the creation of a new religion, but the establishing of God's kingdom. His whole world centered in God. His prayer-life shows that. But the disciples of the primitive church felt free to draw him into their prayer-life. This was not without its dangers. But a man's prayers cannot be made to conform to hard rules. The hymns of the church give a poetic expression to this freedom. Christians desire to pray to Jesus because they are cognizant of his unselfish work, because he seemed to be nearer to them than the great and holy God, and because of the conviction that he was the very

embodiment of God. But with the modern interests in life has come a readjustment of some of the claims of the Christian religion. For one thing, the world appears under a different aspect to the man of today. In this world we can see something of God. All the indications are that God is not far from each one of us, that we all have our being in Him. It is the God in nature, in man, in Jesus Christ, whom man worships. In Jesus dwelt the fullness of the Godhead bodily—the compulsion is upon the Christian mind to acknowledge his supremacy, if not in all the minor interests of life, in the large matters of the soul's religion.

The modern Christian may have lost some things; what is left stands out all the more prominently, like some granitic Alp from whose sloping foot-lands the torrents have washed away the debris of the ages. These crumbling fragments came from the heights, it is true; but they also impeded our way to the summit. Up there the stars shine in celestial splendor. There is no reason why the man of today shall not have as much assurance as Peter had. To the plaintive query of the Master: Would ye also go away? we can say, Lord, to whom then shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we have believed and know that Thou art the Holy One of God.





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